

Vintage

# ROADSCENE

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# Swap-Bodies

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**1:43**



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Welcome to another issue which is a little different. This month's 'Scenes Past' takes a slightly different form, as we have located the original articles in different issues of Commercial Motor, for which the pictures were taken. Therefore, we have been able to quote from them a lot of the details about the demountable systems shown in the pictures and the operations of the companies which used them.

Back in the 1980s – and it keeps coming as a shock to realise that we're talking 30 years ago – when I was with Motor Transport, I talked to a number of companies about their use of demountable bodies. While it wasn't thought of as exactly revolutionary, it was still thought of as a 'modern' idea. We'll look back at these in a future article – just to whet your appetite a little, we'll be talking about early Ford Cargo, Bedford TL and Volvo F7 chassis, in many peoples' eyes, now classics in their own right.

And yet here we have stories of how other companies were using swap-bodies over 50 years ago, and it wasn't exactly a new idea even then – remember that well-known picture of the Carter Paterson Albion. I think it had pneumatic tyres, a windscreen and electric lights, but it was certainly pre-war. Demountables seem largely to have gone out of fashion at present, but I'm sure they'll be back. Just remember, there's nothing new under the sun.

In this issue, we also have a bit of a scoop, with news of what's going on at Brooklands, which could favour the staging of a commercial vehicle

rally there in the future. It's a great venue, as many bus enthusiasts have already found out, and it would be great to see commercials there again.

And there's plenty more besides in this issue, with pictures old, not so old and new, of lorries and buses still at work and at rallies and museums.

Can I take this opportunity to announce that the second of our Road Transport Archive special issues will soon be available from W H Smith or direct from Kelsey Publishing. This is 'A Look Back At The Golden Years of British Road Services', always a popular subject among lorry enthusiasts, which features over 200 pictures of BRS and BRS Parcels vehicles from the 1950s to the 1970s.

These are largely from the collection of photographs taken by BRS enthusiast Mike Houle, now in the care of the CVRTC (Commercial Vehicle and Road Transport Club), backed up by more from the PM Photography archive. They certainly transport (sorry!) you back to what many of us think of as 'the good old days' of BRS, roping and sheeting, Scammell couplings and so on...

The first issue on Seddon lorries is still available, and I've also put together 'Vintage Bus & Coach Volume 2' in the Key Roadscene Collection, following on from last year's album of pictures of passenger vehicles from the Chris Hodge Stilltime Collection, covering Southdown, Gash of Newark, Lincolnshire Roadcar, Grey-Green, Western SMT and more, so it's been a busy start to 2015.

The rally season seems to be in full-swing

already, so let's hope the weather is kind this summer and we can all get out and enjoy the sight of some old vehicles, to bring back those memories. I'm hoping to get out and meet some of you here and there.

In response to my requests on this page in the recent past, I have received a number of stories from readers about their careers in the transport industry, with more to come, so there's lots to look forward to in future issues. I'm pleased to say that subscription figures have risen in recent months, so more of you are taking advantage of the great offers to make sure you get your monthly 'fix' of road transport nostalgia. We'll do our very best not to disappoint you...

*Mike Forbes, Editor*

## ON THE COVER...



In this issue we look at some different swap-body systems from around the early 1960s. For example, here is an Austin FFK 5-tonner in the Allied Suppliers fleet, 822 ALA (London, 1961), based at the company's Shirley, Solihull depot, pulling away from an empty container, which has been unloaded by the hoist. This was one of the ways operators sought increased efficiency by reducing time spent loading. (CHC aau900)



◀ One of the great pictures in Road Transport Archive No 2 on British Road Services, a fine study by Mike Houle, of Bristol HA6G, 206 GWN (Swansea, 1963), fleet no 2G334, from Cardiff depot, a late-type Bristol artic unit with the Longwell Green cab, coupled to a tandem-axle platform trailer, which could gross at 24 tons, neatly loaded, roped and sheeted in classic style.

### ROAD HAULAGE ARCHIVE BRITISH ROAD SERVICES A LOOK BACK AT THE GOLDEN YEARS



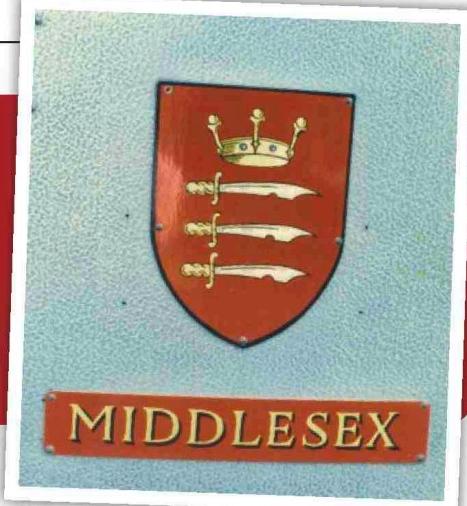
ARCHIVE PICTURES OF BRS GENERAL HAULAGE AND PARCELS LORRIES IN THE 1950S-70S



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# MIDDLESEX FIRE ENGINES



**Above:** The prototype AEC Regent III dual-purpose fire engine, supplied by Merryweather & Sons of Greenwich to Middlesex Fire Brigade was the first new post-war diesel-powered fire engine. A total of eight of these saw service in Middlesex, alongside a fleet of petrol-engined Dennis appliances.

*Ron Henderson tells us about the vehicles of one of the county fire authorities set up in 1948, which only lasted until 1965.*

**M**iddlesex Fire Brigade was formed on April 1st 1948, when Britain's fire services were returned to local authority control, following the disbanding of the National Fire Service. The new Middlesex county fire authority inherited 38 fire stations, covering an area of 232 square miles to the north and west of London.

In common with all the other new county fire authorities, the county council was faced with a massive re-organisation programme, centred on replacing obsolete wartime and pre-war appliances and premises with up-to-date equipment. The county council also decided to incorporate the county's ambulance service with the fire service, to

operate a combined fire and ambulance service.

With a fleet of 198 fire service vehicles and 225 ambulances, this was the country's largest combined fleet of emergency vehicles. In the immediate post-war years, the first new fire engines were built to the order of the Government's Ministry of Works department, which initially commissioned a series of Rolls-Royce powered Dennis F7 limousine appliances, complete with wheeled escape ladders, for allocation to those authorities with the greatest need. Middlesex took up an option to buy two examples.

Also acquired from the Ministry of Works was a single Leyland Comet major pump with Windover bodywork. In 1950, Merryweather & Sons of Greenwich advocated that diesel-

driven fire engines were the way forward and, to this end, introduced a new fire engine, based on a shortened AEC Regent III bus chassis with 9.6 litre diesel engine. Both the prototype and the first production model were acquired by Middlesex, followed by a further six during the following year.

However, the brigade was not wholly convinced of the advantages of diesel engines and decided to standardise on petrol-driven fire engines for most of its fleet. Thereafter, the brigade ordered a total of 37 Rolls-Royce petrol-driven F12 dual purpose appliances and ten similarly powered but smaller F8 pumping appliances from Dennis Bros Ltd.

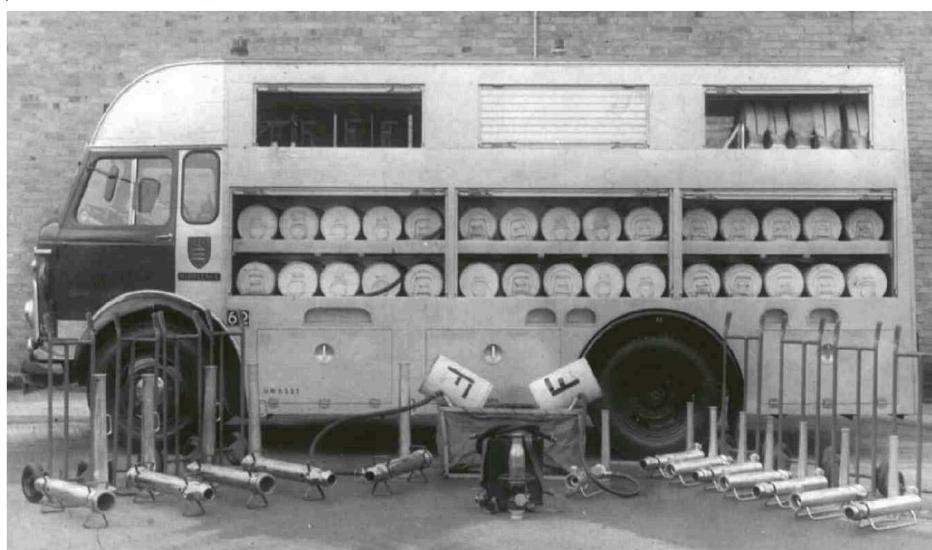
The special appliances in the fleet, that is those not fitted with pumps and designed



**Above:** Pictured after incorporation into the London Fire Brigade fleet, this pair of Dennis F12 fire engines, seen outside the old Edmonton fire station, illustrates the two liveries of Middlesex appliances. The Dennis F12 usually had the pump mounted amidships with controls on both sides, but Middlesex preferred rear pumps for their Dennis appliances. The leading vehicle has the London station nameplate 'J30' which represents Enfield. (N Tarling)



**Above:** Ealing combined fire and ambulance station showing a Dennis F12 pump escape and a Cunard-bodied Morris Commercial ambulance. The service later became the biggest user of Dennis ambulances, all finished in unpainted aluminium liveries.



for primary fire fighting purposes were in total contrast. The turntable ladders inherited at the brigade's formation consisted of Dennis and Leyland appliances, fitted with Merryweather and German Metz ladders. These were all replaced by five matching AEC Mercury vehicles, fitted with Merryweather's new hydraulically-operated 100ft ladders, and AEC's AV470 diesel engines.

The remainder of the appliance fleet, consisting of petrol-engined hose-layers, foam tenders, emergency tenders and salvage tenders were based on Rootes Group vehicles, with Karrier Gamecocks and one Commer Superpoise for the salvage tenders, the rest being based on Commer QX chassis, from an assortment of coachbuilders.

One characteristic of Middlesex Fire Brigade fleet was the livery. Apart from the earlier deliveries, finished in the traditional fire engine red colour, the later fire engines were all finished with unpainted aluminium bodies, with only the front panels being painted red.

By 1962, most of the old and obsolete appliances had been replaced by the latest models and, as the new year dawned, consideration was once again given to the next generation of fire engines. To this end, one Bedford TK dual-purpose appliance, with coachwork by Hampshire Car Bodies,

**Left:** One of the biggest risks for Middlesex Fire Brigade was London's Heathrow Airport, for which there were a number of hose-layers and foam tenders in the fleet. This photo of Acton's 1962 Commer foam tender shows the cans of foam compound and foam generating equipment which had to be used in conjunction with water supplied from a conventional fire engine.



**Above:** Edmonton fire station, just after the formation of the Greater London Council. A new London Dennis F106 pump escape is flanked by a former Middlesex Dennis F8 major pump and a Commer QX emergency tender. (N Tarling)

**Right:** Despite the existence of a Salvage Corps in London, Middlesex Fire Brigade operated three of these Karrier Gamecock salvage tenders, for the purpose of preventing damage from water and for salvaging property, in order to reduce the risk of expense to the property owners and insurance companies. This one, delivered in 1959, was stationed at Stonebridge Park.

**Below:** This unique AEC Mercury with Merryweather bodywork was the last fire engine to be ordered by Middlesex Fire Brigade. It was to be evaluated for the county's next generation of fire engines, along with a similarly-styled Bedford TK. It was pictured with London Fire Brigade insignia whilst operating from Chiswick. (The late Alan Bachelor)



and one diesel-engined AEC Mercury from Merryweather, with a similar pattern of bodywork were bought for evaluation.

However, no further developments were to take place because, in April 1965, the County of Middlesex was incorporated into the Greater London Council. One fire station was transferred to Hertfordshire, two to Surrey and the remainder to the London Fire Brigade.

The ambulance service had previously been separated from the fire brigade section, becoming an independent authority in 1959, but also in 1965, this fleet was incorporated into Greater London and the London Ambulance Service. After just 17 years of valuable service to the community, Middlesex Fire Brigade was no more.



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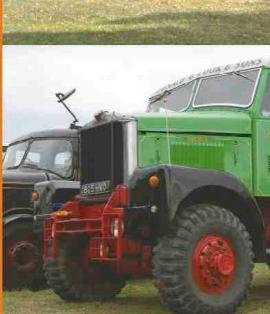
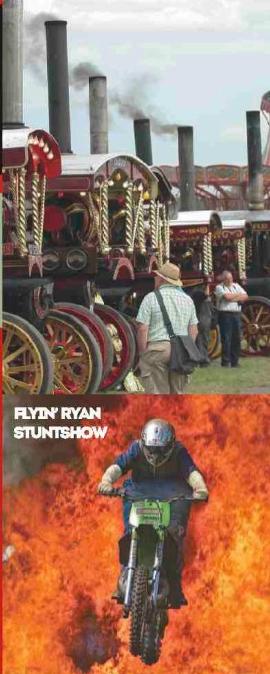
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The plant must have been struggling on this day, back in 1972, as we would not normally get either artics or wagons with non-insulated tipper bodies, even though it was summer. Nevertheless, this ERF with KV cab, EKW 586D (Bradford, 1966), was keeping the boys busy, as it discharged its load of base course into the machine on a site at Whinmoor in Yorkshire.



# THE BLACK STUFF

*Leo Pratt has sent us a selection of construction site pictures taken over the years, covering 'blacktop' operations.*

**D**uring my many years in the construction industry, most large sites I visited would involve new roads, some to be adopted by the local authorities, other being internal roads on industrial premises or treatment plants, for example, but all following a similar pattern of construction. The majority would be completed with 'the black stuff' – tarmac.

This would be laid by the usual Blaw-Knox or Barber Greene type machine, fed by a line of tarmac tipper lorries, their insulated and sheeted bodies keeping the black stuff up to temperature, until they were called forward to discharge into the machine.

Then, as now, eight-wheeled tippers were usually the favoured transport, with the odd little four-wheeler being kept busy with the 'make-up' loads to complete the jobs.

These photographs represent a few of the various motors and ancillary vehicles involved with new roads and resurfacing, seen over the years.



'Last load of the day' on a cold winter's afternoon, as the gang 'marry up' the new road to the existing roadway, with the final load of base course, courtesy of a rather tired-looking Scammell Routeman, KYW 499D (West Riding, 1966), seen at Adel, Leeds in 1973.



W.J. Gossop Ltd, of Hipperholme, Halifax, operated this Scammell Pioneer, presumably ex-War Department, TWT 137 (West Riding, 1957), complete with a special trailer, equipped with road-planing machinery, used to prepare roads for resurfacing. It was in use on a contract near Wakefield in July 1974.



Tarmac the contractors used this Leyland Comet tanker, OGT 756 (London, 1954), probably originally with one of the major fuel companies, as a water bowser. It was seen during resurfacing works, near Wakefield town centre, during August 1978. The robust towing arm suggests it would have been towed between sites.



**Left:** 5 'The humble four-wheeler', a Tilcon-liveried Dodge 500 Series, KBF 432H (Stafford, 1969-70), is seen delivering its load on a large new housing development in Hemsworth, during September 1977. Even in the large fleets, there was always work for a four-wheeler, delivering small orders, getting into awkward areas, but especially for the 'make-up' loads to complete a job at the end of the day.

**Below:** Seen in Knottingley in Yorkshire, in summer 1979, was John Biesty's fine Foden S39 eight-legger, ARB 273L (Derbyshire, late 1972).



**Left:** Part of the contract on a large treatment works at Doncaster in 1988 included new internal roads and the boys are seen here busy laying the topping, courtesy of Butler's Leyland Bison 2 six-wheeler, JNN 677V (Nottingham, 1980).

**Below:** On a site at Painthorpe, S & S Gilson of Haworth's tidy Rolls-Royce powered Seddon Atkinson 300 eight-wheeler, JTU 714T (Chester, late 1978), was seen tipping its load of base course during spring 1986. In this case, the Akerman H10 seen at the rear would distribute the tarmac for the boys to lay by hand.

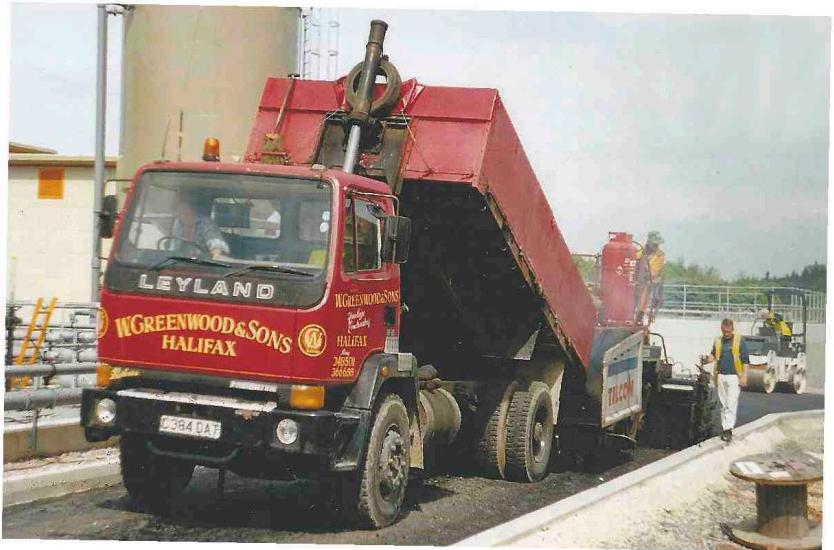




**Above:** Yet another full load delivered by this last generation Leyland eight-wheeler, a Constructor 8, with the narrow cab, E757 JRN (Preston, 1987-88). It was seen at work on the construction of internal roads at a waste water plant during 1988.

**Right:** Another Leyland, this time a four-wheeled Freighter, C384 DAT (Hull, 1985-85), in the fleet of Greenwoods of Halifax, seen discharging into the Tilcon paver, on a busy site north of Leeds in 1996.

**Below:** 'The line-up'; a quality four-wheeled Foden Alpha, X227 HVL (Lincoln, 2000), heads the line-up of tarmac tippers in 'Lafarge' livery, seen waiting their turn on a resurfacing contract in Barnsley during March 2003. Note the double-skinned, insulated bodies and cover sheets, as on the other vehicles in these pictures, to maintain the temperature of the tarmac.



# Stateside Stars

**Norman Chapman** takes a look through his lorry archive and talks about the time the Two Ring American Circus visited his neck of the woods. Please forgive the change in vernacular, because they are American vehicles, for once we are calling them trucks....



**Above:** This F Series Mack, UDT 61S was the representative truck, if you like, because it was coupled up to the booking office trailer. This was a sort of 'Talisman'. It was parked at the main entrance and the first thing the customer saw, which only added to the intrigue of the circus. This well presented 6x4 unit could have easily been awarded 'Best In Show' anywhere it went.

In August 1987, I saw a poster advertising the Two Ring American Circus which was showing on The Town Moor at Newcastle Upon Tyne. As a long time American truck enthusiast, I went along with my camera to see what vehicles the circus actually used, and was not disappointed.

No self respecting American Circus could be seen without American vehicles to match, and this was definitely the case: there were more Stateside trucks than you could shake a stick at, as well as Atkinson, Bedford and DAF vehicles, plus a Thames Trader. Here is a run down of the best of what was parked up on the Town Moor site.



Another nice example of US engineering was this White Road Commander 6x4 rigid, fitted with a curtain-sided body. TSS 677X was more than likely used to carry animal feed for the circus' performing elephants, camels and horses. As the circus used fork-lift trucks to move equipment around the site, the body choice was a good one.



Above: Another Road Commander, AOM 267T, this time a six-wheeled tractor unit, was seen hitched to a drop-frame low-loader box trailer. This combination's role was to transport circus animals.



Above: The only Kenworth on the site was a K100. Just like the Mack, this was another well turned out rig and was used to pull a trailer carrying the elephants. Like all of the other US trucks running with this circus, HHY 582X had been registered in the UK.



Above and left: Another F Series Mack, DMJ 876T, this time a 4x2 configuration, was a genuine US left hand drive truck. This tractor also towed an animal trailer, but a fold away neon light frame was fitted on the trailer roof. The truck's secondary role was to be parked on the circus perimeter to display the lights at night.



Above: I was delighted to see the next wagon working behind the scenes. It was a rare 6x6 Atkinson Searcher, with a Cummins engine badge on the radiator grille. MHV 526L was an ex-Snow Plough and Gritter chassis, on which the spreader body had been replaced with an aluminium box body. The front of the cab still clearly showed some of the snow plough-associated equipment. These were a roof-mounted light bar with spots, a roof-mounted number plate, two extra spot lamps below the windscreens and the plough mounting frame.



**Above:** The next gem, also parked around the back was 205 EUT, a Thames Trader, registered in Leicestershire in 1964, providing living accommodation. This travelling home must, at some stage, have gone through some restoration work and certainly wasn't showing it's age. (This vehicle looks very similar to a vehicle we showed on the cover and in our 'Scenes Past' feature on the NAAFI in January 2012, which was built as a mobile shop by Coachcraft Ltd of Croydon – Ed)



**Above:** Also flying the flag for the UK, albeit in this case, the 'Star-spangled Banner', was a Bedford TM 4x2 tractor unit. OKU 173X was hitched up to an easy entry low slung box trailer, which was also fitted with neon lights for the circus.



# MORE FROM NEW ZEALAND



**John Raggett** follows up his Bedfords in New Zealand article with a wider selection of older vehicles to be seen on the other side of the world...

It seems that New Zealanders like their old vehicles just as much as we do. Many of their vehicles are British-made, or British types, with a smattering of American and others, just to make things even more interesting. And some of them are still in use, as well as seen 'resting' at rallies or in museums.

## Still on the road

John says that he saw the little Austin A30 two-door saloon (1) scurrying around Wellington a couple of times, looking a little tired but clearly still in regular use. It certainly makes a contrast with the modern Vauxhall – or is it a Holden – seen next to it at a junction.





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Richmond is south of Nelson and the base for the local bus operator, SBL Coaches. The company's fleet includes a former London Transport Leyland Titan (2) which, unlike most ex-pats of this type, has retained its roof. There were no clues to identify its London identity.

The 1950 Daimler Consort (3) was seen in Queenstown, rather spoiled by the signwriting on the sides, but if that's what it takes to keep a vehicle on the road, then so be it.

The Fordson E83W pick-up (4), with a locally-

built 'step-side' style body, was seen advertising a local garden centre in Rotorua.

At Whakapapa, John encountered a convoy of Vauxhalls out on a jolly. The 1937 Vauxhall 25GY (5) was built by Holden in Australia. Its owner told me John had only just finished restoring it. It had a minor coolant leak which didn't seem to bother him. He said it was what you can expect from what effectively was a new engine. John is unsure whether the newer PA Velox and FB Victor next to it were Holden-built or British

exports, as he says he didn't get the chance to talk to their owners, because the party seemed more intent in getting into the hotel bar...

It was perhaps inevitable that he would come across a Routemaster (6), in this case in Christchurch. It had the number 2724 in the cab, so presumably it was formerly RML2724 with LT. The registration details show it as being a 'Leyland AEC RM.' Inside, the lower passenger saloon has route details for services 7 and 23, West End Connections.



6



7

## Museum Pieces

The Founders Museum in Nelson has several road vehicles in its collection. 'Little Flick' (7) is the affectionate name given to the 1954 Land Rover Series 1 fire engine, after the popular 1948 children's song. It was operated by several fire authorities and forestry companies and used for accessing remote areas that would be difficult for larger appliances. It was inherited by Nelson City Council in 1989 who later gifted it to Founders Museum.

There was no information about the Dennis F8 fire engine seen in the fire station (8) other than it was lettered Christchurch Fire Service. Other items included a Lansing Bagnall tow tractor (9) and a Ransomes mobile crane (10).

The reconstructed motor garage included several vehicles once operated by Newmans, a New Zealand-wide coach operator, whose roots go back a long way. The oldest exhibit is a horse drawn stage coach. More modern exhibits include a 1952 Ansair Flexible Clipper with Melbourne-built Ansett Transport body (11). Although not British-built, it does have a Leyland engine. More typical of the Newmans'

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fleet is the Leyland Comet (12). Unfortunately, there was no history available for this exhibit, which has locally-built bodywork. Newmans were big users of Leylands and AECs, and later Bedfords and Fords when the former were no longer available.

The Wanaka Toy and Transport Museum is an Aladdin's Cave of transport treasures. A Standard Flying 8 saloon (13) sits close to a one third size working model of a Foden timber tractor (14), but no details of its history available. Some of the luckier exhibits are under cover, such as the selection of cars (15), including some of BMC's finest, a Wolseley 6/110 and a 16/60, showing off their Farina-designed bodywork, and an Austin A40 estate car, in the Fire Engine Hall.

There is also a Bedford J-based security van





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(16) and a number of lorries including Ford Thames ET6, a Leyland FGK, with its 'Threepenny-bit' cab and a Commer (17) and a couple of 'Parrot-nose' Kew Dodges, including, nearest the camera, a Fargo-badged example, alongside a couple more Bedfords, an A Type and a J with, at the far end, a 1928 Leyland G Type (18).

Less fortunate are all the lorries, cars and buses left outside and at the mercy of the weather. These include tractors (19), like the two grey Fergies, one sitting on an ingenious device using it to power a roller. The lorries (20) include an Austin FFK, Leyland Boxer, Commer C Series and Ford D Series, which have at least been saved from the scrapman, but will eventually deteriorate parked outside. The cars (21) include a late-1930s Austin 'Big 7' Ruby four-door, a Ford Escort Mk 2 and two 100E Prefects, plus one of those funny little Japanese vans from a few years back.

Finally, there are a couple of photos taken at the Museum of Transport and Technology in Auckland. The vehicles outside the tram shed (22) include at least one BUT trolleybus, a Bedford TK, Ford Prefect and early low-light Morris Minor. There is a rather garishly-painted Jaguar Mk V saloon (23) and inside one of the



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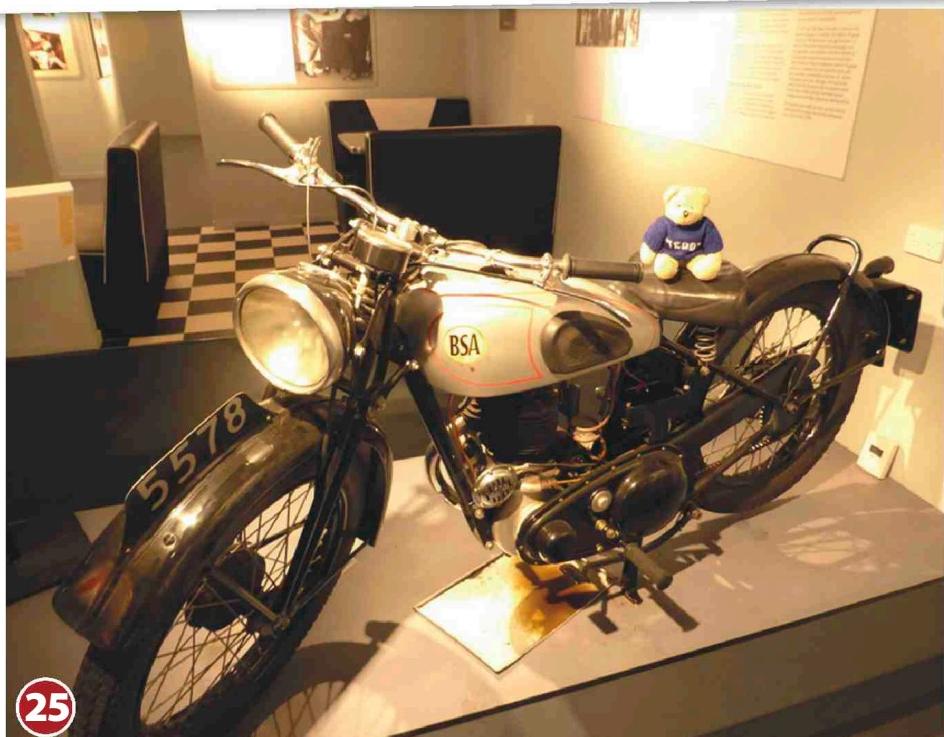


19



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halls, which has an exhibition relating to social history, a Morris Mini (24), linked to the social freedoms associated with the 1960s, and a BSA motor cycle (25), icon of the teddy boy era.

The main museum is linked to another large exhibition hall, dedicated to aircraft, located about 2km away and linked by a tram line on which historic trams run, on which holders of museum tickets travel free. Two cars were in use on the occasion of my visit, ex Melbourne and Sydney.

John says: "On the road on my previous visit in 2012, there were plenty of Fodens still to be seen, but this time around, I spotted only one. It was a red eight-wheeled flatbed towing a four-axle draw-bar flat trailer, both with classic, green sheeted loads. Unfortunately, it was heading south 'doing a ton' while I was heading north, also travelling at speed, so I was unable to get a photo. Sadly, the decline in British motor manufacturing means that less and less of our exports can be seen."

"It is fortunate, perhaps, that at least there are no shortage of European lorries to be seen alongside the Japanese and American products. All is not lost, however, as there are plenty of Alexander Dennis buses to be seen throughout the North Island. They are the current favourite in Auckland and Wellington, with more to come, I gather. One day, hopefully these will feature as British Vintage vehicles..."



# Behind Closed Doors

*Ian Young visited a vehicle collection where many of the vehicles rarely see the light of day.*

A few years ago, I was invited to visit father and son team, David and James Shopland, to see their collection of vehicles. While primarily interested in the military vehicles within the collection, there was a fascinating array of commercial vehicles there too, some of which are featured here. While many of the vehicles were normally tightly-packed in their respective storage sheds, making photography quite difficult, when the vehicles were brought out of the confines of their sheds for their annual clean and check over before being bedded down for the winter, on this sunny September morning, I managed to get some better photos of the hidden collection, once some space had been cleared around the vehicles still indoors.

While the vast majority of the vehicles within the collection are in restored and running condition, there are a few that are still waiting

their turn to be brought back to life but, as with anything, little things like life and jobs get in the way of the restoration work which, as we all know, can quickly eat into any spare time you may have.

Among the many vehicles displayed outdoors, there was a 1949 AEC fire appliance with Merryweather turntable ladder. When this was positioned in front of the main group and the ladder partially raised (I'm not that good with heights!), we could get a bird's eye view of the vehicles. Among them was a 1942 AEC Matador timber tractor, which was bought in 1946 by James' Great-Grandfather and turned into a timber tractor.

This is, in fact, one of six Matadors owned by the Shoplands, which include an RAF generator wagon with less than 4,000 miles on the clock, and an RAF tractor. Originally, this was one of twenty gun tractors, converted into machinery workshops and used to service the vehicles

carrying prefabricated homes from Birmingham to Plymouth. The body which was removed from the Matador was kept and later converted into a garage by James' father, to house his MG car, and the benches are still in everyday use in the family's sawmill - proper recycling!

## Military Bias

The Shopland Collection also boasts quite a number of military Bedfords, including both wartime and post-war vehicles. James' father, David Shopland has a soft spot for the 1955 Bedford RL, because it's exactly the same vehicle that he took charge of in 1957, while he was running the local TA Unit! When this TA Unit was disbanded in 1968, the opportunity arose to buy the vehicle, and he then used it while running the local Army Cadet Unit and today it still proudly wears the Wessex Divisional signs.

The wartime Bedfords include a 1943 Bedford QLC, originally built as a fuel bowser. However,



**Above and right:** This 1949 AEC fire appliance with Merryweather turntable ladder was positioned in front of the main group with the ladder partially raised, so that we could get a bird's eye view of the vehicles.

**Left:** The use of the turntable ladder allowed me to take this aerial photo of the collection laid out for the 'Spring Cleaning' session.

the tank was removed and subsequently lost at some point in its life. The vehicle was bought unseen over the telephone, from a scrapyard in Dorchester and, to their amazement, David and James found it was fitted with a slightly over-sized Matador gun tractor body when it arrived, and they could hardly believe their luck, given that they needed a body for one of their Matadors.

Other Bedfords in the collection include a pair of 1944-dated QLR radio trucks but, interestingly, they each have a different internal layout, and there's also a rather nice 1943 Bedford OY too.

Also brought out for the photo shoot was a 1941 Chevrolet FAT (Field Artillery Tractor) or quad. There is one interesting query regarding the quad, which readers might be able to help with. The body doesn't have a roof hatch or air



vents in the back and, while the FAT body has Canadian build plates and on closer inspection looks to be similar to the Guy bodies with rotating air vents. James wonders if it might be one of the very first to be built, which was modelled on the Guy and sent to Canada to be copied?

Sticking with the military theme, the Austin K5 gun portee is one of the more exotic vehicles in the collection. Built to carry a 6 pounder or 57mm anti-tank gun across the desert, the body was designed to allow the crew to fire the gun forwards or backwards, while fixed onto the back of the lorry.

The two fire engines in the collection have an interesting history. They were originally acquired to participate in Clevedon's VE/VJ day commemorations. The AEC used as our photographic platform for the day was based on a Regent chassis and was supplied to the



**Above and right:** Not all of the Matadors in the collection have been returned to military specification, this 1942 timber tractor originally bought in 1946 by James' Great-Grandfather reflects the family business.





**Above:** With the vehicles out of the sheds it gave me a chance to get a better look at this rare Crossley RAF prime mover and 1944 Matador, both awaiting their turn to be restored.

**Above:** The 1938 Dennis turntable wasn't brought out for the photo shoot, but it does have an interesting history having served in Plymouth during the Blitz.

**Main image:** James Shopland seen here perched at the top of the turntable ladder to get some photos for his own records.





Completing a 'Bedford Bonanza' within the Shoplands' collection is this lovely example of a 1943 Bedford QLC general service truck.



**Above:** This 1942 AEC Matador gun tractor is one of the vehicles that regularly attends military vehicle shows each year and is one of six Matadors owned by the Shoplands.

**Above:** The Austin K5 6-pdr gun portee is a very rare truck, especially in private hands and one of the more exotic vehicles in the collection.

From left to right we have the 1942 AEC Matador gun tractor, 1943 Bedford QLC, 1942 Austin K5 6pdr portee and the 1944 Bedford QLR, 1943.



**Right:** The bodywork of the Chevrolet Field Artillery Tractor is slightly unusual, with features that are similar to the Guy Ant Quads. Does anyone know anything about this style of body?

**Below:** This is one of the other Matadors in the collection which is still awaiting restoration and, as you can see, storage space is at a premium!

**Below right:** A recent acquisition at the time of my visit was this rare example of a Crossley FWD 3-ton 4x4. Needless to say it needs a little TLC, but at least it's been saved for the future.



**Below:** Here we see the complete Chevrolet Field Artillery Tractor, limber and 25-pdr-gun ensemble, which is also regularly seen at shows throughout the year.



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Denbigh Fire Service, but there was also an open-cab Dennis turntable stored in one of the sheds, which was supplied new to the Plymouth Fire Brigade, serving in the city during World War II and the Blitz.

There's so much history crammed into this collection, it's impossible in the space I have to recount all the tales behind the vehicles fully, and while some of the vehicles are regularly taken out to various events during the show season, the collection has grown to such an extent it's impossible for James and his father to take them all, but keep an eye out for them if you're in the Somerset area.

*\* My thanks to James for inviting me to Somerset for a highly enjoyable day, and to his father David for filling me in on the fascinating history behind the vehicles and for making me feel so welcome.*

**1:** Despite many people thinking that this 1950s Thames, with the BLSP (British Light Steel Pressings) Commer-style cab, would probably be too far gone to restore, it is scheduled to be resurrected at some point in the future.

**2:** This 1955 Bedford RL has a special interest for James' father, as he used exactly the same vehicle while serving in the TA, and was reunited with it, when it was sold off when the TA Unit was disbanded.

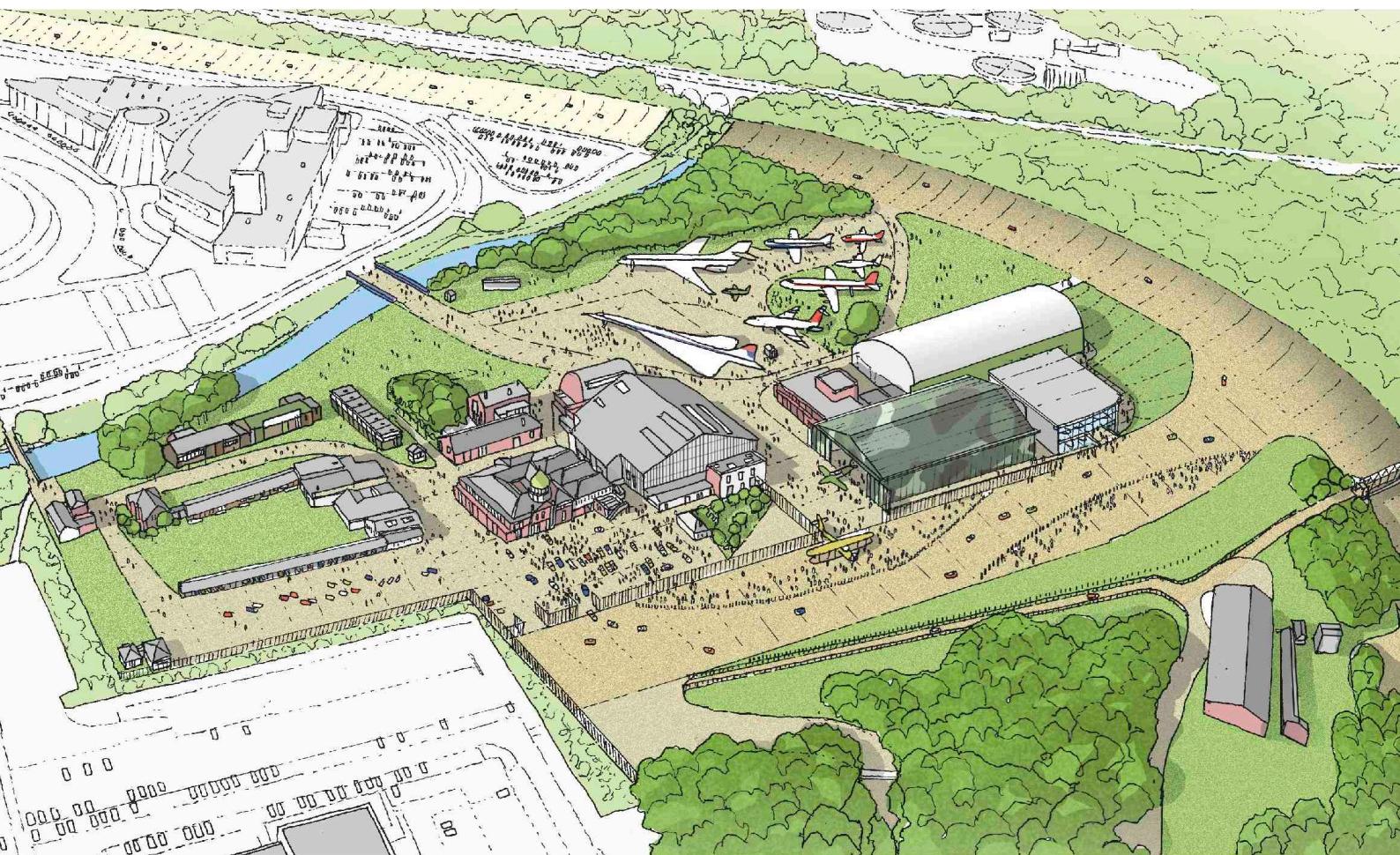
**3:** The collection has a great many ex-military Bedfords within it, such as this Bedford OY tucked away in the corner of one of the many storage sheds.

**4:** An RAF Bedford QL fuel bowser hidden away in a shed with many other treasures.

# VINTAGE TRACKSCENE

## TRUCKS AT “THE TRACK”?

*With news that the museum in charge of the historic Brooklands race track – or what remains of it – has won funding for a new building highlighting ‘Aircraft Production’, **Malcolm Bates** looks forward to seeing more historic commercial vehicles taking part, alongside vintage cars, aircraft and classic buses. To that end, he’s starting small with Mini-based commercials, but suggests big ideas are just around the corner...*



In the days when the Locke-Kings were planning the construction of Brooklands, the only available ‘commercial vehicles’ were of course horses and carts – with perhaps the odd steam traction engine thrown in for good measure. It’s one of those quirky ironies that, as with the construction of that other revolutionary mode of transport a few

decades earlier – the railway – the humble horse was called upon to construct a right of way for its successor.

During my formative years at school – and later once I’d manage to fund my own motorised transport – I was both a regular visitor to Brooklands and eager junior member of The Brooklands Society. I lived in hope that one day the entire historic

**Above:** This is an artist's impression of how the Brookland's site will look once the existing hangar has been moved and rebuilt beside the London Bus museum building. Featuring a new visitor centre, it will have an 'Aircraft Production' theme, reflecting the importance of Brooklands during the war. This will enable a considerable length of the Finishing Straight to be restored to its former glory - leaving plenty of space for a commercial vehicle rally in 2016? Could be.

**Right:** Did lorries play a part at Brooklands? Surely it was just a playground for upper class toffs? Here's the answer. RR Jackson's trusty Ford - is it an AA or a BB? - Motor Racing Service Van proudly displays 'Brooklands track' on its flanks. Jackson's tuning sheds still survive, so time for a replica period van?

**Below:** Did prewar Ford commercials have especially sturdy half shafts? How the driver managed to get Jackson's service van reversed this far up the Member's Banking is sadly lost in the mists of time – but that alone must have been worth watching. The crowds on the Member's Bridge however, are more likely to be there to follow the rescue of Gordon Bretelli's racing Austin 7, after an incident high up the banking in 1937. Could Austin 7s go fast enough to justify going up that high?

site would once more be restored to its former glory. As a schoolboy oblivious to the world of politics, property dealers and high finance, it seemed a simple task – who wouldn't want Brooklands to reverberate to the sounds of supercharged pre-war racing cars and stripped-down motor-cycles once more? The answer, of course, was 'lots of people' – especially those who had managed to acquire themselves a piece of quiet leafy Surrey within decibel range of the site.

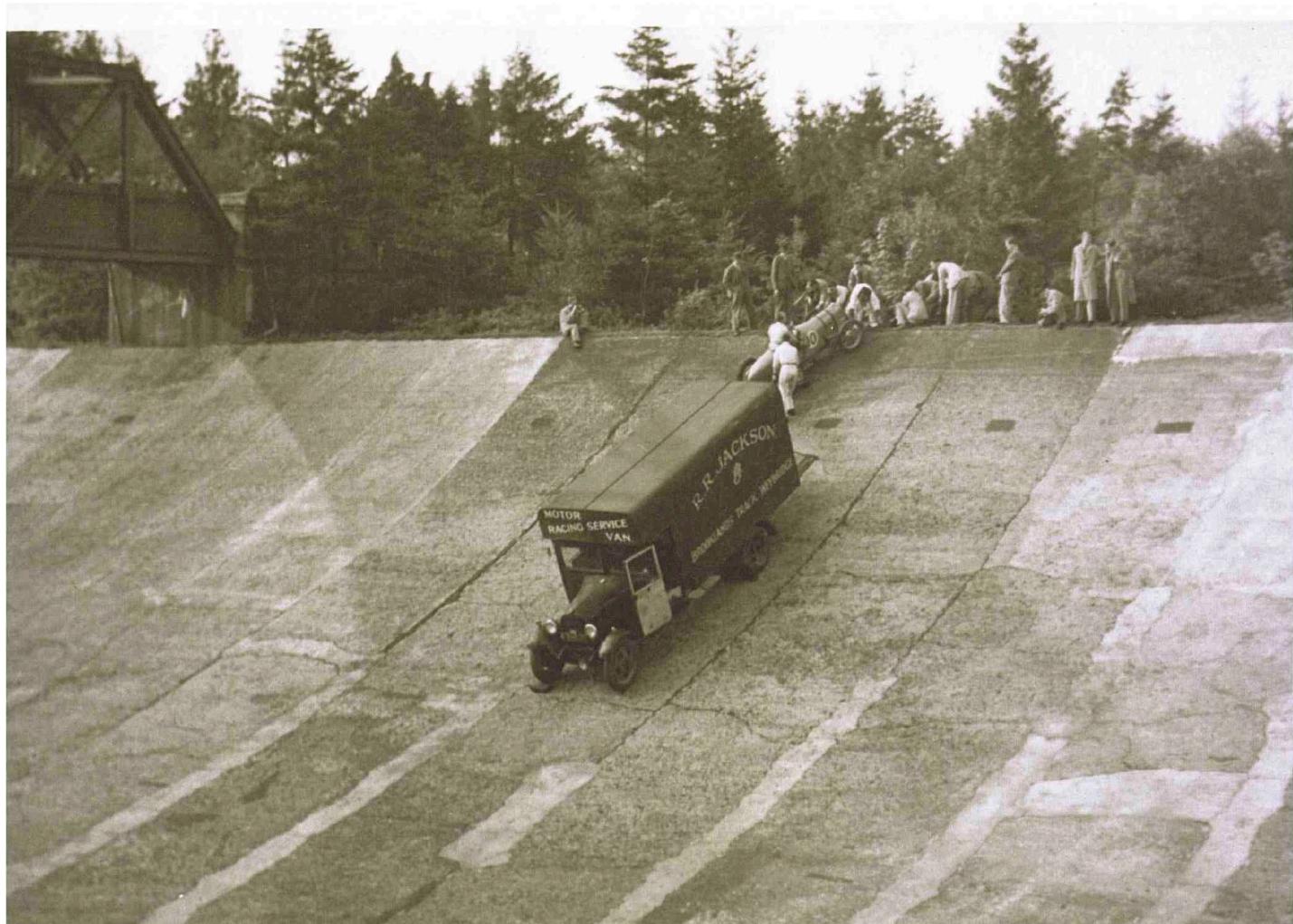


So, scrolling forwards to today, it's both sad and amazing to reflect on what finally did end up happening. Sad that what should have been designated a 'World Heritage Site' (had the term existed at the time, that is) was split-up and 'developed' piecemeal, with faceless corporate offices being built from The Fork right up to within spitting distance of the famous Club House. Brilliant that the Club House, the Test Hill, the Member's Bridge (albeit now rebuilt), a

few sections of the 1930s Campbell Circuit and a reasonable length of the famous banking was saved from destruction. Ever since, the site has been improved with further 'themed' events and added 'visitor attractions' which is great, except...

#### NO LONGER UP IN THE AIR

Well, except the Weybridge site's wartime history was still impacting on any plans to recreate authentic period motor racing



scenes, between the Club House and where the Finishing Straight joined the banking – in the shape of a very substantial aircraft hanger, built directly onto the line of the track. Given half a chance, as a schoolboy, I'd have been happy to have driven the bulldozer that flattened it – but now it too has historic significance and it has to be said, without the support of the, er, 'aircraft wing' of enthusiasts, The Brooklands Museum would quite possibly never have got off the ground, as it were.

So, although it's taken Museum Director, Allan Winn and his team some while to come up with a plan that satisfies everybody, the news that the old grey

World War II hanger is finally going to be moved and that section of track restored is indeed great news. But also great news is that the significance of Brooklands as a site of aircraft production – which it was almost from the birth of the track itself – is also being recognised. Obviously, aircraft production by its very nature will have a commercial vehicle element to it in that certainly during wartime – and more recently when part of BAC – the former Vickers factory on the site would have been a hive of activity as aircraft components had to be transported either in, or out to other sites, in vans on ordinary lorries and on Queen Mary trailers...

## COMMERCIALS - THE NEXT PRIORITY

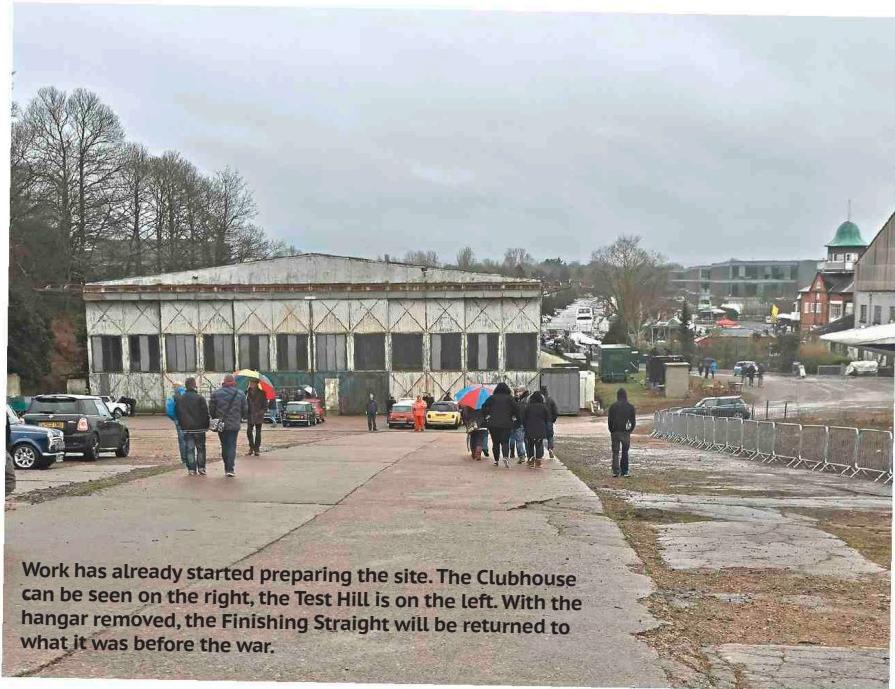
The arrival of the former Cobham Bus Museum – now housed in its new building behind the Clubhouse – already brings a strong 'commercial vehicle' element to Brooklands, so the big question is, when are we going to see more lorries and vans?

To get a flavour of what we might expect to see in the near future, once the Finishing Straight is restored, I paid a visit to a 'season opening' event for Mini enthusiasts. Phew! Thankfully, there were enough Mini vans and pick-up trucks to enable my visit to justify some coverage in *Vintage Roadscene*. Because as it turns out, these



little load carriers were once a key part of the aviation world at a time when Britain's aircraft industry was still a big hitter on the World Stage, with aircraft like the VC10 and BAC111 flying the flag. As it happens, the Brooklands Museum does have something of a fleet of aviation support vehicles that reflect this – although, sadly, at present they are parked out in the open and are suffering from the elements. But the future? That's looking even more amazing...

Sadly, so far at least, there are no signs of the London-to-Brighton run moving to a Brooklands Museum start. Even though it would make life easier for owners of historic transporters, as well as entrants. True, it



wouldn't then be 'London' to Brighton, but would that be such a bad thing? And, in any event, once the new Aircraft Production Hall is up-and-running, there should be enough room for Brooklands to run its own commercial vehicle rally – and possibly host a road run and swapmeet.

You're thinking Brooklands has no real connection with lorries? Not true, the Diesel Speed Record Car, so famously modelled by Dinky Toys was, in effect, based on the running gear of an AEC STL double decker bus, wasn't it? And also, back in the 1930s, Ford Motor Company used the track as the venue for a one-make ride-and-drive event for potential car and commercial vehicle customers.

"Once we have the Finishing Straight restored early next year, there will be more than enough space for us to hold an event for commercial vehicles," Allan Winn told Vintage Roadscene. "And once we have completed the Aircraft Production Hall, we plan to erect a giant two acre cover, to protect our outdoor static aircraft exhibits. Then our fleet of preserved aircraft support commercials will also go undercover," he added. Exciting stuff, eh?

**Left:** During the pre-war years, Ford tended to 'do its own thing' in terms of exhibiting its new products - like it held its own 'Motor Show' at the Royal Festival Hall, rather than attend the regular SMMT event. Here's another Ford-only event held at Brooklands in June 1939, just months away from the outbreak of World War II, which would change 'The Track' forever. The event attracted record crowds and featured cars, vans and larger commercials. How many different models can you identify? Significantly, once the current wartime hanger has been moved, with a bit of shuffling, a modern-day version of this event could be recreated on the Finishing Straight once more.

## THE FUTURE IS IN '4-D'

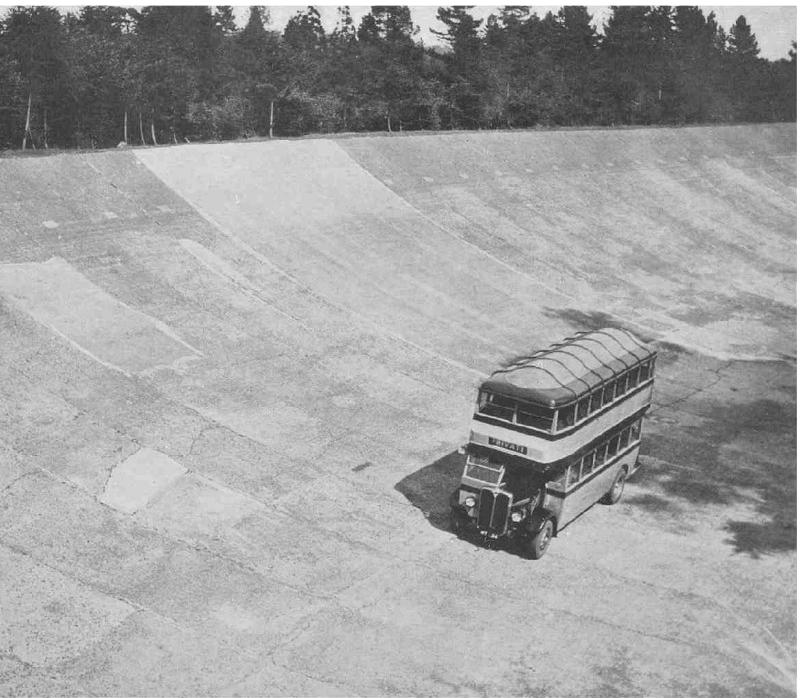
But even more possibilities for future commercial vehicle-based attractions are already in place. They just need a bit more 'joining up'. The high spot of my recent visit was the interactive performance, giving an insight into what it was like to blast around Brooklands in the mighty 24 litre Napier Railton. This unique car lives in the Brooklands Museum and is often wheeled out and fired-up at events. It can no longer travel round the famous banked track for which it was built however, but that didn't stop Allan Winn and his team.

They shot a whole load of video footage around the paddock, recreated some pit scenes and high level shots of spectators from the Clubhouse balcony. Then they shipped the assembly off to France where the old banked circuit at Monthlèry still exists. And with some clever cutting, special glasses and a flight simulator-style seat,

**Right:** And what about passenger vehicles? While the Bentley entered by Mr & Mrs Scott blasts out from the Finishing Straight onto the banking leading to the Railway Straight, race officials observe proceedings from what looks like a pair of single-deck Associated Daimlers. The event is the 1929 Double Twelve – the nearest thing local residents would allow to a 24 hour race.

**Below:** Here a brand new AEC Regent trundles around the Member's Banking in the attempt to break some long distance records – during the weekdays when motor races were not being held, obviously?

**Below right:** Will she – won't she? And here the trusty Regent attempts the famous Test Hill.





1

**1:** The Brooklands Museum already owns a small fleet of commercial vehicles, but these mostly have an aviation support theme. Seen here is rare BMC WE model normal control tanker entered in the London to Brighton run a couple of years back, together with 6x4 Carmichael Range Rover.



2

**2:** Sadly, at present, aside from exhibits in London Bus Museum, most commercials - including some gems like this BOAC Leyland Atlantean - have to stand outside and are suffering from exposure to the elements.



3

**3:** HA Viva van, Bedford CA crewbus and Morris Minor van all sport period airline liveries, but when the giant new cover over static aircraft display is completed in around three years time, there will be scope for plenty more support vehicles.

**4:** Luckily, the London Bus Museum does feature some commercials that are kept under cover like this coachbuilt Bedford CA Ambulance....

hey presto! Visitors can get as close to feeling what it was like to charge around Brooklands at 160 mph as most of us are ever likely to get.

But that got me thinking. The London Bus Museum is already running film showing how London buses were refurbished at Aldenham works. Considering the size of the place – it's demolished now but, trust me, it was huge – what the film really deserves is a big screen. Then? Just imagine. Using the same high-tech seats and the state-of-the-art '4-D Theatre', maybe Brooklands Museum and the London Bus Museum could jointly introduce a film recreation of what it was like to drive a classic London Transport double decker



4

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS AT THE TRACK

**May 4th** - Emergency Services day. Police, Fire & Ambulances - they are commercial vehicles, aren't they?

**May 10th** - MG Regency Run - Didn't MG once have a works van?

**May 16th** - The 1940s Relived - Blackout. White-painted wings. Rationing. But more significantly, a re-creation of the 1948 Motor Show!

**June 13-14** - Brooklands Double Twelve Motoring Festival. Held on the date as close to the opening of Brooklands in 1907 as possible.

**June 28** - London Bus Museum '1970s Summer' event. Dust-off those brown flares, trim your sidies and be there.

\* For further events go to [www.brooklandsmuseum.com](http://www.brooklandsmuseum.com)



**Left:** And this Ford 100E van once operated by London Transport in a disgusting shade of sludge green.

**Below:** When is a bus not a bus? How about when it's been converted as a recovery unit or mobile workshop, like this STL?

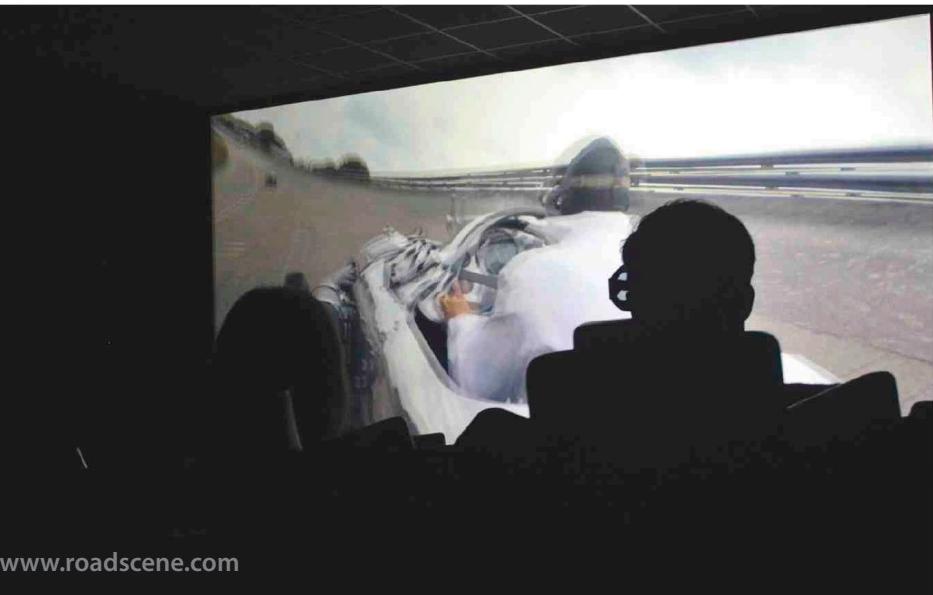
**Right:** The Brooklands Museum already hosts special events like the forthcoming '1970s-themed Bus Rally and an annual 'Emergency Services Day' that attracts large numbers of visiting fire engines, ambulances and police vehicles, so an event for 'more ordinary' load carrying commercials is surely no big leap? Stay tuned, it could happen sooner, rather than later.





**Right:** Be seeing You? Is a Mini Moke a 'commercial vehicle' worthy of a picture in Vintage Roadscene? Certainly, they were used as taxis in the cult TV series, 'The Prisoner' so the answer is "yes".

**Below:** The recent season-opening Mini event at Brooklands also attracted a few more conventional Mini-derived commercials such as this genuine 1978 police Minivan. That'll be a 'Panda van' then, will it?



bus in the rush hour on a real route with simulated gear whine, vibration over tram tracks, the whole works! Or how about driving a revolutionary AEC Q-Type? Or better still, how about recreating a drive in some of the 'vintage' lorries that were on the road, while the Napier-Railton was on the 'The Track'.

I bags first go on the Scammell Hundred Tonner, OK?

Wouldn't that be great?

## IN THE DRIVING SEAT

Given half a chance, our Malcolm lists the Scammell Hundred Tonner (loaded of course!), a Maidstone Corporation trolleybus (thanks to Sandtoft Museum, he's already had that wish come true), an AEC Q-Type coach, a pre-war Sentinel steamer, a post-war Sentinel diesel, a Trojan 'Brooke Bond' 1-ton van, a 1960s Foden 'Road Train' in Australia, the Commer-based Ecurie Ecosse racing car transporter (Editor Mike and Malcolm once had a brief go in it many years ago), an ERF 'Sabrina' (wonder why?) and, last but not least, a part in the recreation of 'Hell Drivers', with tuned Perkins-engined Dodge 'Parrot Nose' tippers capable of more than 30mph. Hell Drivers in '4-D'? Brilliant!

But what would you nominate as the 'Top Ten' lorries you'd most like to have a drive in? Either in real life or part of a '4-D Experience'? Editor Mike Forbes would love to hear from you in our letter pages. And we'll pass the details on to Allan Winn at Brooklands Museum. You never know...

**Left:** A look into the future? This is a still from the '4-D' interactive film of the mighty Napier-Railton at speed to give visitors some idea of what it would be like to lap Brooklands at the average speed of 160mph. But could the same technology be used to give a 'Flying Experience'? Or maybe what it was like to drive a pre-war London bus? Or a lorry?

# SWAP-BODY SAGAS

The original swap-body system was the railway container, here being loaded onto a Karrier platform lorry, UR 2603 (Watford, Hertfordshire, 1929) by a Walker-Pagefield lorry-mounted crane of the LMS railway company. (CHC aaa921)



**Mike Forbes** delves into some old magazine articles to find the background to some interesting pictures from the Chris Hodge 'Stilltime' Collection of vehicles with demountable bodies.

**T**he vogue for demountable bodies has come and gone over the years. Looking through my collection of pictures from my days with Motor Transport in the 1980s, I was surprised to find not just the one set of pictures, from which I was going to add to this article, but four different demountables stories – to which we will return in a future issue.

Meanwhile, let's go back further. It probably goes without saying that the earliest users of demountables were the railways, in the shape of containers on flat lorries and railway wagons. They were used for various purposes, to avoid the handling involved in the transhipment of individual goods items, for example, with furniture removals, an early application.

Of course, the use of containers led to the development of liner trains and the modern ISO container, transported on land by road or rail, as well as by sea and even air. But that's another story. What we are considering here

are demountables or swap-bodies.

In 1963, British Railways tried the then seemingly market-leading Abelson demountable body system, 'with three BMC 3 ton prime movers, in conjunction with six Abelson demountable van bodies, for the parcels 24 hour collection-and-delivery service at the Tyseley parcels concentration depot, in place of a fleet of BMC rigid of the same capacity', according to an article in Commercial Motor.

The area served to the south of Birmingham contained many motor parts and accessory manufacturers, so there was plenty of work, which was handled by the three vehicles, in place of a fleet of 11 previously used.

The Abelson 'stillage' body was raised hydraulically in preparation for removal and four swivelling legs on the body were lowered into a vertical position to act as stands. The stillages were located close to the bank for end-loading, and normally the driver of the

prime mover would collect a second stillage as soon as he had deposited the incoming load, the average turn-round time being five minutes, compared with a loading delay with a rigid vehicle of up to two hours. The bodies were equipped with lockable roller shutters at the rear and the roof had a plastics translucent panel at the front, to aid checking in daylight hours.

Two similar vehicles were put into use at Leamington Spa, in place of semi-trailer outfits, which was, of course, the usual type of vehicle used by British Railways. This experiment could be thought of as 'too little, too late' as BR would give up its 'smalls' work to National Carriers, which did little in the way of real innovation and did not last long in the greater scheme of things. Of the many parcels carriers which have come and gone since, there have been surprisingly few which have embraced the swap-body principle to any extent either...

The equipment used by BR was produced by



**Top and left:** The Abelsons demountable body system was tried by British Railways in 1963 at Tyesley depot, with three Morris 3-tonners, with 'Angle-planned Cab', like YUV 625 (London, 1960) and six box bodies or 'stillages', as they were known. (CHC abe130/131)

**Bottom left:** Banbury Buildings introduced the Abelson demountable system in 1962, with seven Leyland Comet 7-tonners, like fleet no 40, TBW 813 (Oxfordshire, 1961), seen here unloading a 'stillage' at the company's works. (CHC abf196)



Abelson and Co (Engineers) Ltd, of Coventry Road, Sheldon, Birmingham. A year earlier than the article on these vehicles, another started: 'Wastage of vehicle time at termini has been repeatedly cited by leading authorities on road transport economics as the most serious problem facing the haulage industry, and, although inadequate depot facilities are often to blame for protracted delays, selecting the most suitable type of vehicle for deliveries can often provide a solution to the problem.

Employing a prime mover in conjunction with a number of semi-trailers has, in many cases, enabled turn-round delays to be reduced to a minimum, but many operators have obtained a similar benefit by using a demountable body system. This reduces the capital cost of the equipment used and offers many additional advantages.

Obviously, the ideal system for a variety of applications is the self-unloading type, in which the body takes the form of a stillage that can be self-unloaded by a mechanism incorporated in the chassis of the prime mover. This eliminates dependence on external aids.



for unloading, such as a permanent stand, a heavy-duty fork-lift truck or overhead hoist gear .... the Abelson-Weeks system offers the advantage that standard types of body can be used and that the body can be unloaded without tilting from the horizontal. The system has been applied to widely differing operations in the past 12 months.

Basically, the Abelson-Weeks equipment comprises a lifting frame of channel-section members actuated by twin hydraulic rams, and a body stillage equipped with four retractable legs. The prime mover is backed under the stillage for loading, the lifting frame is then elevated sufficiently to raise the legs clear of the floor. The body is locked in position by lever-operated pegs and each leg is rotated to a position parallel with the body side members. These are of channel section, and each leg is retracted into the recess so that it does not form an obstruction. If the hydraulic pump is engaged when the body is locked, audible warning is given by a hooter in the cab.

Channel-section members on the base of the stillage body act as guides, as the vehicle is backed into position, and although the vehicle must be accurately located in preparation for loading (and straight-line backing is essential in the case of the standard body), the average



Above: The body is raised hydraulically and the legs lowered, as seen here.... (CHC abf201)

Below: ... and the vehicle draws away, to pick up another loaded body for delivery. (CHC abf199)

driver has no difficulty in mastering the technique. While a greater amount of space is necessary for lining-up the vehicle than is required for coupling-up to a semi-trailer, a modified form of body is being developed which will enable a vehicle to be backed in at an angle, and this will reduce the backing

space required for a 7 ton vehicle. A platform stillage body offers the advantage in some applications that it can be stacked in multiples in off-season periods, given that appropriate handling facilities are available.'

The article went on to discuss the trials of the system for the transport of concrete



**1:** The Leyland Comets, like fleet no 43, TBW 816 seen here on a snowy day in early 1962, were to replace Commer QX and Bedford S Type dropside rigids in the Banbury fleet. (CHC abf202)

**2:** The Abelson system was demonstrated at a display of BMC commercials, fitted to a suitably signwritten Austin-badged BMC FE 7-tonner, on Birmingham trade-plates 195 OG. (CHC aau079)

**3:** At the same display was seen Austin FFK 5-tonner, 743 UPG (Surrey, 1961), in the livery of Allied Suppliers, lettered for the Chitwell, Nottingham depot, carrying one of the company's demountable containers. (CHC aau075)

**4:** Another of the Austin FFK 5-tonners in the Allied Suppliers fleet, 822 ALA (London, 1961), based at the Shirley, Solihull depot, pulls away from an empty container, unloaded by the hoist. (CHC aau900)



**1**



**2**



**3**



**4**

components for concrete garages, sheds, coal-bunkers and other constructions, by Banbury Buildings, Ltd, of East Adderbury, near Banbury. This company was using seven Leyland Comets, with Eaton two-speed axles, with 14 bodies, alongside existing vehicles in its fleet.

It was hoped the equipment would last twice as long as the vehicles' five years life in the fleet. A down-side was that the system reduced the payload by about two tons, so a heavier vehicle was needed. However, the careful loading of the sets of components no longer needed to take place overnight, but the bodies could be loaded during normal working hours, ready for collection and then delivery the following day.

The Abelson equipment had been demonstrated at a display of BMC commercials, which also featured a vehicle of Allied Suppliers. This company had been formed to provide distribution services for the Home & Colonial, Liptons, Maypole and Pearks chains of high street grocery stores, well-known nationwide before they were side-lined with the advent of supermarkets.

A container is manoeuvred at the loading bay on a four-wheeled trolley, by the Nuffield tractor. (CHC aau896)



A 1961 article in Commercial Motor said that Allied Suppliers used a hoist-loaded container system, to cut distribution costs in the Midlands area, from a depot at Shirley, Solihull, using 14 vehicles and 21 containers to provision 250 shops in its area, with similar systems in other areas of the country. The forward-looking company also used powered conveyors in its warehouse to speed handling and loading of goods.

The 650 cu ft containers, built of light-alloy, weighed about 13 cwt each, designed for a



**Above and left:** Another Austin FFK 5-tonner from the Shirley depot, YXC 349 (London, 1960) is seen delivering to a Pearks self-service shop, in a typical suburban shopping parade of the day. The driver is still unloading by hand, using a sack-barrow, in the traditional style of delivery. (CHC aau902/908)



maximum payload of 6 tons. Equipped with roller shutters at the rear and on both sides, the containers also had Perspex panels in the roof. With four steel-lined timber-packed mounting runners, the base of the container was located on two pairs of angle-section chassis longitudinals and held in position by four hooks with quick-release threaded bolts, tensioned manually by wing-nuts. Using a direct-mounted skeleton subframe of light-alloy saved weight and cost, compared with mounting a container on a platform body, as well as a lower floor height and easy access to the chassis running



Above: One of Morgan Edwards of Shrewsbury's Austin FE 7-tonners, RUX 172 (Shropshire, 1958), unloads its Taskers demountable box onto the storage frame at the depot. (CHC aas216)

gear when the body is removed. The containers were manufactured by Duramin, King and Tayloy and the Metropolitan-Cammell Carriage and Wagon Co. They were interchangeable, along with some light-alloy platform bodies used for special loads.

At the depot the containers were mounted on four-wheeled solid-tyred trolleys, made by B C Barton, of Tipton, which were hauled by a Nuffield Universal Three industrial tractor. The bodies were transferred from the trolleys to the prime movers by a Patterson-Hughes 74 ton electrically-operated gantry hoist with traversing gear, which could span

three vehicles. An empty container could be unloaded from a prime mover onto a trolley, and a full replacement mounted on the prime mover in a few minutes by one operator, helped by the tractor driver.

This system was considered to be preferable to using artics, which would have cost more and been more difficult to manoeuvre, while the drivers preferred rigidis. The quick turn-round at the depot was essential, as most deliveries were carried out on the less busy days at the shops, Monday to Thursday and the vehicles with demountable bodies could make more runs each day.

Commercial Motor said all the prime movers were Austin forward-control 5 tonners, powered by 5.1 litre diesel engines. Each cab was fitted with a heater and demister, a fully adjustable driver's seat, twin mirrors and a foglight. Dunlop RB.6 8.25 x 20, steel-corded tyres were employed throughout, and drivers reported favourably on the improved road-holding characteristics. Wear records gave promise of increased mileage life. The article went on to describe the maintenance regime and inter-depot movements of the company.

Going back another year, to 1960, there was an article about another demount system, evolved in the early 1950s with Tasker, by Mr E K Edwards, managing director of Morgan Edwards, wholesale provision merchants of Shrewsbury, which was used for deliveries in the surrounding area, as well as countrywide by Tecalemit lubricants of Plymouth. Morgan Edwards was part of the well-known European SPAR organisation, set up for smaller retailers to take advantage of discounts offered for large group orders.

The Tasker body components comprised a steel framework with special side-members, with detachable wheels, to remain within legal width limits on the road. When mounted on the stand, the body was supported and clamped in a horizontal position and the lorry could be backed under the body between the wheel brackets and projecting arms on the body moved into deep socket members attached to the vehicle headboard, secured by locking pins. Bodies, built by Holyoake of

Morgan Edwards also used Thames 4D normal control chassis. ONT 792 (Shropshire, 1956) is seen about to pick up a demountable body. (CHC aas220)



**Right** Having been loaded at the bank, sitting on the frame, the demountable body is picked up by the Thames. (CHC aas226)

**Right middle** The Thames is seen with its demountable body, ready to make its deliveries from the Morgan Edwards SPAR warehouse at Shrewsbury. (aas231)

**Below** The Austin FE, loaded with its demountable body, outside the Morgan Edwards warehouse. The rear overhang was short on this type of vehicle, as the body length was determined by the normal control Thames chassis also used. (CHC aas230)

Shrewsbury, were of composite construction with three-quarter roller-shutters at the rear and tailboards equipped with a step, with channel-section side-members, pillars and roof sticks of top-hat section, plus interior longitudinals of the double rounded-channel type.

The prime movers in the fleet included ten Austin forward control oil-engined 7-tonners, plus four normal control Thames of the same capacity. An old unlicensed lorry chassis was used for the internal transfer of containers. Instead of using a platform body, additional frame members were fitted to the standard chassis to give uniform support to the container, for simplicity, a lower floor height and easy access for maintenance.

Two stands were located in the dispatch bay, loaded from pallets conveyed from various sections of the warehouse by fork-lift and pallet trucks. An additional four stands were housed under cover outside the warehouse to accommodate outgoing containers and spare empty containers. Two delivery runs of up to 40 miles could be completed in a day.

Going back further, in 1958, a previous article had discussed how 'demountable



bodies for long-distance vehicles saved labour, reduced the fleet and permitted a one-driver, one-vehicle policy for Lew-Ways Steel Tube Products Ltd, of Watling Street, Cannock, describing the company's development of demountable and interchangeable bodies for a fleet of nine long-distance C-licence vehicles. Loads included tubular gates, pig-weighing machines, churn trolleys and special structures for agricultural use, and the vehicles delivered from Scotland to Cornwall.

All the company's vehicles were new Thames Trader 5-tonners, working with twice that number of fixed-sided bodies. Empty bodies were removed with the aid of pulley blocks, suspended from a special tubular structure, then transferred to the workshops by a depot vehicle, an old unlicensed lorry, purchased for a few pounds. Pre-loaded bodies were carried to the hoist bays by the same means and raised into position in readiness for collection.

A vehicle would normally return from a run in

the evening and depart the following morning. Formerly, loading had to be performed by a night staff, or it was necessary to delay departure of the lorry for the subsequent run. The company reckoned to have saved labour, reduced the fleet by one vehicle and could keep its one driver, one vehicle rule for efficiency.

Each vehicle was equipped by the company with two inverted channel-section longitudinals, welded to the chassis and bolted to adjacent brackets. Corresponding box-section members fitted to the workshop-built bodies were supported in the channels. Six pairs of chassis eye brackets and an equal number of angled pins were employed to lock the body to the chassis, which could be performed in a few minutes. The pins bridged the channel above the body longitudinals, thus preventing vertical displacement and ensuring sufficient rigidity.

The fixed-sided bodies weighed only 10

**Top right:** Thames Trader 5-tonner, LRC 786 (Derby, 1957) has a loaded demountable body lowered onto it from the storage framework, using the block and tackle system, at the Lew Ways Ltd Cannock works. (CHC aaz657)

**Right:** Another of the Lew Ways Thames Traders, VOG 953 (Birmingham, 1957), with its demountable body all loaded up with the company's products ready for a delivery run. (CHC aaz654)

**Below:** Not a demount-fitted vehicle, but this shot of Lew Ways' Ford 400E pick-up, VOX 645 (Birmingham, 1957) also has in the background the storage frames for the demountable bodies and the old Austin K4 lorry, which moved the bodies around the works. (CHC aaz659)



cwt and the simple hand-operated block and tackle system preferred. Before establishing the system, experiments were made with a body stillage supported on leg jacks, which were considered too easily damaged. The use of semi-trailers was also discounted.

Thus we can see that demountable body systems were nothing new in the 1950s, although talking to the manufacturers and operators who used them at the time, one would have thought them the latest thing. The Abelson hydraulically-operated system worked in a similar manner to most of the later equipment. It is interesting to see how different companies' operations suited quite different systems – in the case of the Lew Ways equipment, virtually home-made, but it worked. Other operators preferred artics, like British Railways and BRS Parcels – and you'll notice how none of the goods were actually loaded onto the vehicles on pallets – that was a revolution still to come...



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# The Final Years of a Municipal Bus Service

*Observations of a small local undertaking from 1970 until 1985 by Clive Baker*



Above: Parked next to the repair shop at the Horninglow Street depot, Guy Arab III 5LW, FA 8596, fleet no 3, has been assigned to driver training turns. The effect of a 1961 rebuild are clear from the upper deck front glazing. Next in line is BFA 478B, a Morris tipper truck, complete with orange warning beacon, employed for recovery duties and servicing of bus shelters. In the background, partly obscured, is no 63, the sole remaining Guy single-decker, at that time assigned to the education department. (Pictures by the author, unless otherwise credited)

Pictures have appeared in my previous articles in *Vintage Roadscene* of several examples of buses operated by Burton upon Trent Corporation, succeeded by East Staffordshire District Council from 1975. The country's then principal brewing centre was my hometown; with a modest population of 50,000 persons, it operated a municipal bus fleet numbering approximately 40 vehicles.

The period I intend to describe in this article, once I have set the scene, bore quite a contrast to the previous post-war years when nothing seemed to change. It was probably the most diverse, a number of second hand purchases joined the fleet and some changeable liveries appeared during that time.

## In the beginning

Burton upon Trent Corporation Transport Department was established in 1903 to operate electric trams, the first service commencing in August, with the usual celebrations associated with such an event. Eight and a half miles of 3ft 6in gauge track were laid throughout the town and across the bridge spanning the wide flood plain of the River Trent. Originally 20 four-wheeled, open-top cars, supplied by Dick, Kerr & Co of Preston, maintained the service. In a town well-known for over 20 level crossings, the scourge of local road users, the trams had frequently to negotiate crossover rails, an experience not appreciated by my mother.

To satisfy the needs of residents living in areas not covered by the tram routes, the first motor bus were delivered in 1924 to

operate on two new routes. Bearing the local registration, FA 1820, the first was a Guy B model, which began an association with its manufacturer which was to last until 1959. The rail-less PSV was no stranger to Burton. As early as 1907, the locally-based Ryknield Motor Company had built an experimental double-deck model, which had undergone trials in the town as well as other locations.

New Year's Eve 1929, the last day of tram operation, saw revellers in evening dress and party hats clamouring to take a final tram ride, 18 new single-deck Guy vehicles having been made ready to commence duties on the following morning. As was the custom, the tram replacements had previously been paraded in the town hall square for ratepayers to inspect their investments.

## Room on top

Burton bus travellers did not have the option to ride upstairs until 1944 when, subject to wartime restrictions, the council was granted its first two double-deck buses. There had previously been a reluctance to operate such vehicles, because of a fear of them being overturned by high winds when crossing the long bridge that spans the River Trent. In fact the Burton and Ashby Light Railway tramcars, which had running rights over the Corporation tracks, remained open-topped for similar reasons.

Guy Arab II 5LW, FA 7948, fleet number 20, with utility Weymann 56 seat body, finished in grey primer, became the first in a long line of Guy double-deckers. By the end of 1945, the town boasted a fleet of 14 similar buses, no 26, a Daimler CWA6, being the odd man out.

Although the purchase of single-deckers continued during the early post-war years, the requirement for higher capacity vehicles continued but, together with the hindrance



Above: Parked at the Wetmore terminus, from where the first motor bus service departed in 1924, is ex-London Transport Guy Arab II 5LW; still in service in 1964. This veteran soldiered-on until 1967, when it was shipped to the USA.



Above: Captured at the Burton Bus Rally at the National Brewing Centre in 2008, preserved Guy Arab III, 5LW, FA 9716 of 1950, re-bodied by Massey in 1960, presents a splendid sight, complete with its iconic Red Indian chieftain atop the radiator.

of level crossings, low bridges also caused restrictions. Twelve low height double-deckers augmented the fleet. They all had Guy Arab III chassis, with Gardner 5LW diesel engines; six delivered in 1947, carried Roberts 53 seat bodies and a further six in 1950 bore stylish coachwork by Davies.

It will be noted that this relatively small undertaking kept to the practise of purchasing new vehicles, not only for PSV use, but also its municipal fleet in general. It was with some surprise one day in 1953, when following a double-decker through the town, I spotted a departure from the usual 'FA' registration prefix. The Guy Arab II 5LW, was one of six similar buses, new to London Transport in 1945/6. Such was the demand for higher capacity that these latest acquisitions replaced single-deckers of a newer marque, those vehicles becoming assets to a number of rural operators.

## The school bus years

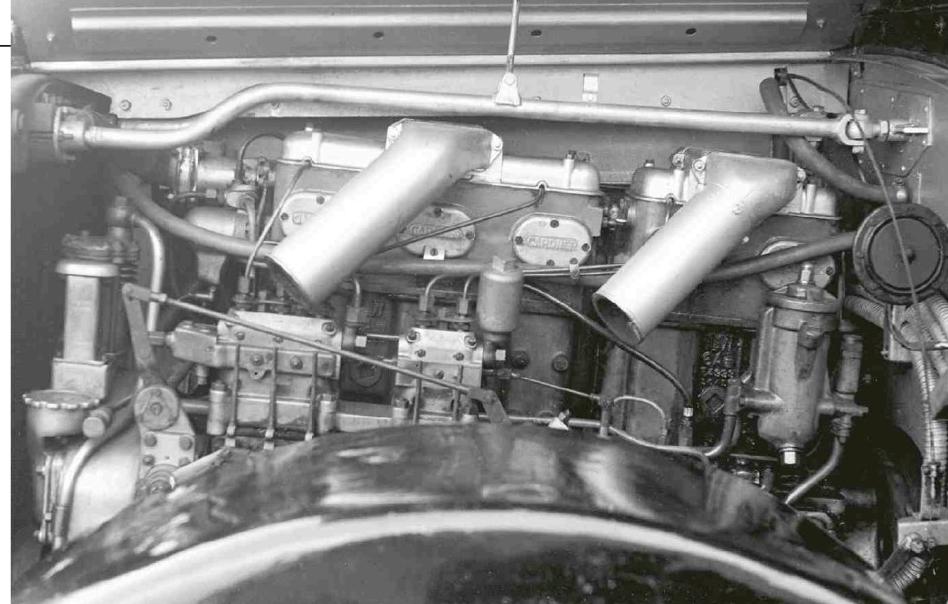
Becoming a regular passenger, travelling to and from school between 1954 and 1963, I observed in great detail the events affecting my town's PSV fleet. For instance, when a bus entered the works for re-certification and when another re-appeared with some rebuilding to its bodywork or painted in a slightly different tone of the Corporation's madder and cream livery. Following the arrival of the 'London Buses', as they were known to many locals, there were few changes, until 1957 heralded the purchase of the first two 'all steel' Guy Arab IV, with 5LWs and MCCW Orion lightweight bodywork.

Only six more Guys were to follow, 1961 witnessing the end of a long association in one respect but, on the other hand, the beginning of another with Wigan-based body manufacturer, Massey. The Daimler CSG5 model, followed by the CCG5, coupled with the Massey H33/28R body, formed the pattern for all future vehicles until 1968, when production of this particular chassis ceased. Fleet number 102, JFA 602F, one of the final batch of three, was also the last bus to be powered by the Gardner 5LW engine. Apart from applying coachwork to a succession of Daimlers, Massey also re-bodied three of the 1950 batch of low height double-deckers in 1960; one of which FA 9716, fleet no 16, survives in preservation.

## Into the Seventies

With new 'back-enders' no longer available and one-man operation inevitable, the Corporation had no choice but to modernise the fleet. After a period of almost 20 years, during which single-decker numbers diminished, it was with some surprise that I observed the first of three Daimler Fleetline single-deck buses, painted in the timeless old madder and cream livery.

Moulded windscreens and automatic doors, quite common features for some years when travelling with other operators, were something of an innovation on the streets of Burton where, incidentally the level crossings had disappeared and the roadway under low bridges lowered. The new vehicles, MFA 703-5G, fleet numbers 103-5, built to CRG6LW specification, carried B44F Willowbrook bodies, converted to 'standee' type in 1972. A new livery of green roof, cream middle and red lower was applied to them in 1973.



**Above:** Close-up view of the Gardner 5LW diesel engine, belonging to single-decker FA 9291, fleet number 63 when owned by the '63 Preservation Group.'



**Above:** Daimler CCG5, fleet no 82 of 1963, heads for the town centre. The clock tower of the town hall, where, in past years, many new vehicles were demonstrated to residents and councillors, can be seen in the background. Both no 82 and sister bus no 84 were sold to Stevensons of Uttoxeter in August 1973.

**Below:** The first double-deck Daimler Fleetline to enter service, fleet no 106, collects passengers in Station Street beside a typical basic Burton bus stop, simple pole barrier, sign and litter bin.



The work of yet another coachbuilder appeared in town during 1970, Northern Counties (NCME) winning the order to supply three double-deck bodies, to H42/33F specification, for Fleetlines (CRG6LX), RFA 406-8J, fleet numbers 106-8. Clearly from the NCME stable, the style of these vehicles differed from those of neighbouring operators, by having moulded windscreens and less window bays. Number 106 held the distinction of being the first overall advertising bus in Burton, aptly featuring the product of a local brewer and being hired to transport visitors to various brewery events.

With six Fleetlines in service, one-man-operation on one route became a reality, that being number 5, which terminated at Wetmore, where the first one-man service had commenced in 1924.



**Above:** By August 1973, ex-Bournemouth Leyland with Burlingham coachwork, fitted with side roof lights, ideal for the 'Sunny South'; had been re-painted in the Burton three-tone livery. Captured heading towards the town centre, it is likely that no 1 was returning from a works service to the Pirelli tyre plant, visible in the background.

**Right:** The last of the ex Bournemouth single-deckers turns from Station Street into High Street, on route 9. Although purchased for one-man operation, it would appear that a conductor is on board.

**Below:** Daimler Fleetline no 15, one of the 1973 intake of 12 such buses, demonstrates the curvaceous lines of the Willowbrook coachwork as it catches the sunlight, while operating route 5.



### South Coast interlopers

Breaking with the normal practise of acquiring new buses, four second-hand single-deckers arrived from Bournemouth Corporation in 1971 and 1972, to augment the one-man undertaking. Having reached three figure fleet numbers, with earlier vehicles departed, it was time to start again.

Fleet nos 1 and 2, the 'Bournemouth Belles', NLJ 271/2, were both Leyland Royal Tigers, to PSU1/13 specification carrying Burlingham B42F bodies, although when they first entered service in the Bournemouth fleet as numbers 93/4 in 1954, their rear open platforms meant a body specification of B41D. These underfloor-engined vehicles presented another 'first' for Burton Corporation. Having swapped their 'Sunny South' yellow and crimson livery for the madder and cream of the Midlands town, I first witnessed them operating the often lightly-loaded number 7 route.

The stay of number 1 was short. In 1974, this vehicle was transferred to the Education Department, replacing Guy Arab half-cab no 63. Number 2 has more recently been noted on the preservation scene restored to its original Bournemouth livery.

Fleet nos 3 and 4 were Leyland Tiger Cub PSUC1/1, with B42F bodies Park Royal. No 4, which commenced service in 1972, was the first bus I noted painted in the new livery. RRU 901 and 904 were delivered new to Bournemouth in 1955, as fleet numbers 96 and 99, both sporting side roof lights. Being re-numbered 24 in 1976 to make way for further second hand purchases, no 4 held the distinction of being the last of the ex-Bournemouth vehicles to remain in service, finally being withdrawn in 1978.

### The New Age and "All Change"

The purchase of 12 new double-deckers in one order was a rare event, only the second





**Above:** A busy Saturday morning scene in Station Street, captured in the late 1970s, before this thoroughfare became traffic-free. Ex-Portsmouth Atlantean no 5 and sister vehicle no 1 prepare to turn in opposite directions serving their respective routes. To the left of the picture is Fleetline single-decker no 105, new to the Corporation in 1969 and, in the distance, one of the remaining Daimler CCG5 vehicles.

time in Corporation history, as the 1950 intake had numbered six lowbridge and six highbridge vehicles, all from the same source. During July and August of 1973, a dozen Daimler Fleetline CRG6LX types, with bodywork by Willowbrook, to H44/33F specification, all sporting the new three-tone livery, graced the streets of Burton only six years after the withdrawal of the last utility Guys.

This influx spelled the end of the road for

all of the remaining Guy Arabs and some of the earlier Daimler CCG5 types, two of which found new employment with local independent, Stevenson of Uttoxeter.

At the end of March 1974, Burton upon Trent lost its County Borough status. Although local government officers remained at the town hall, administration became the responsibility of East Staffordshire District Council. The coat of arms, displayed on all municipal vehicles, whatever their function,

had to keep company with the bold title 'East Staffordshire District Council', applied to the panels above the lower deck windows.

Our own bus service, sometimes treasured, sometimes maligned, not always profitable had lost some of its identity and the feeling of it belonging to the townspeople was waning.

To mark the passing of the County Borough and in keeping with tradition, a line-up of three PSVs posed for the camera in the Town Hall square, the last of the Daimler CCG5s, no 102; old no 11, one of the 1950 intake of Guy Arab III double-deckers, preserved by the Burton '63' Group; and Fleetline number 106 wearing a special commemorative livery.

## Second hand from north and south

With financial reserves at an ebb in the wake of the new acquisitions and a further requirement for suitable one-man vehicles, two 1963 vintage Leyland Atlanteans, PDR1/1, with Metro Cammell H43/33F bodywork, were bought from Portsmouth Corporation. The handsome appearance of these first generation rear-engine types made quite a contrast with the curvaceous styling of



**Left:** Photographed crossing the Trent Bridge, Leyland Titan no 7 was confined to 'special duties' because of mechanical problems.

their more modern stable-mates, but not such a contrast as when first introduced to Portsmouth, in that city's crimson and white livery, to replace the much lamented trolleybuses.

Numbered 5 and 6, 205/6 BTP, originally 205/6 in the Portsmouth fleet, were later joined by four further Atlanteans from the same source in 1976. 221 BTP, 222 BTP, 216 BTP and 220 BTP acquired the fleet numbers from the ex Bournemouth single-deckers, numbers 1-4, taking the total of one-man double-deckers to 21 vehicles.

Service in Burton was not to last long for Atlantean number 4, 220 BTP. Having been involved in a head-on collision in 1978 with a similar vehicle belonging to another company, the 'Pompey' double-decker did not run again.

The advent of two further second hand purchases presented some surprise in 1975. At a time when the front-engined half-cab was rapidly disappearing, two such vehicles arrived from Wigan (by then part of Greater Manchester PTE). Numbered 7 and 8, JJP 507/502 were intended for service on the hilly route number 10 but, when found to be unreliable, earned their keep transporting children to and from the town's Victorian swimming baths.

Both were 1962 Leyland Titan PD2A/27 chassis, no 7 (Wigan no 131) was fitted with bodywork by Northern Counties to H36/28F



**Above:** Leyland Titan no 8 ascends the ramp leading from the River Trent 'Washlands' towards the Trent Bridge, conveying a school party from the town swimming baths, seen on the left. In the background, no 7 waits ready to operate another baths run.

specification, of a style much resembling the ubiquitous Southdown 'Queen Mary' that graced the South Coast for many years, whereas no 8 (Wigan no 35) carried H37/27F bodywork, not unknown to Burtonians, by Massey.

### The final new purchases

To celebrate the Silver Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II in 1977, Fleetline no 13 took to the streets wearing a revised livery; blue replacing the green normally applied to the upper deck

and roof. This colour scheme later became standard.

Many Burtonians commented on an unusual PSV travelling the town's routes in 1977, Daimler CVG6-30, 7517 UA, new to Leeds in 1959, which served as a test-bed for the Voith transmission to be fitted to the forthcoming Dennis Dominator chassis. Its bodywork, by Leeds based Charles H Roe & Co, had not been seen locally, although the ex-London Guy Arab II 5LWs had been re-conditioned by that company prior to entering service at Burton.

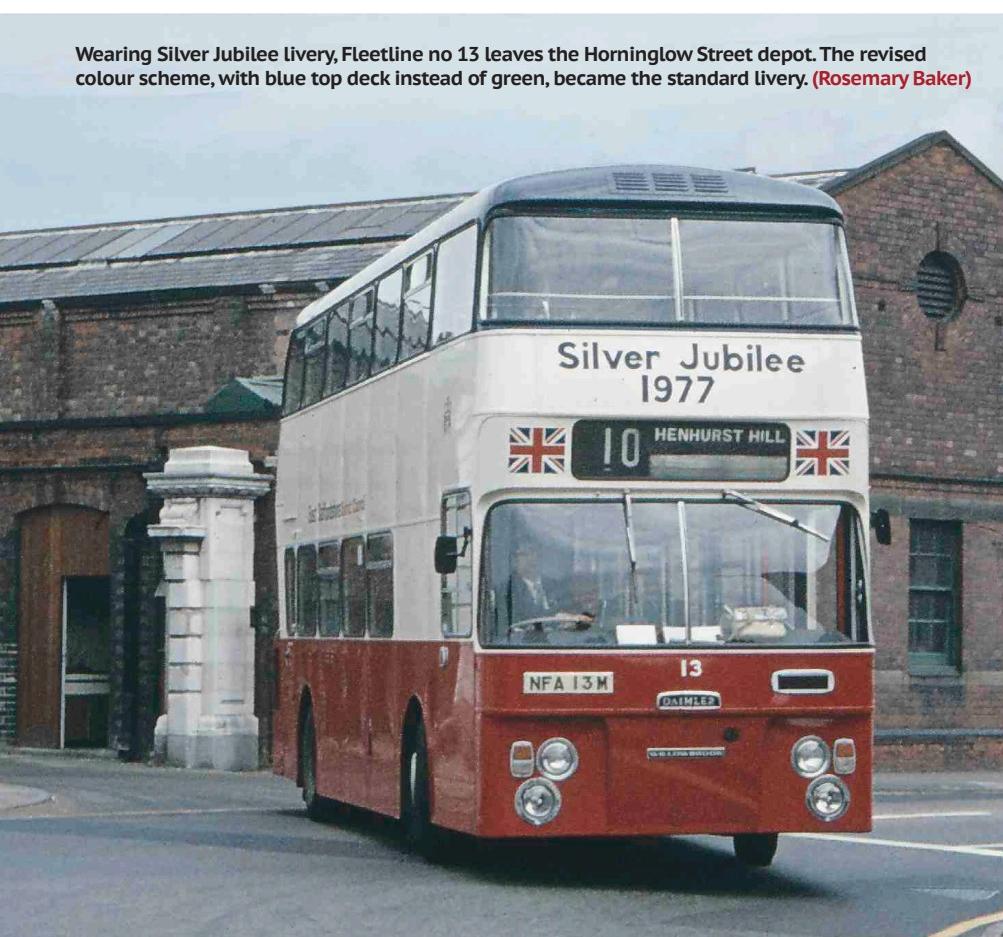
The transport department of ESDC was obviously impressed, as no less than 15 such buses, to DD101A, DD110A, DD120A specifications, entered the fleet progressively from 1978 until 1981. All carried East Lancashire H43/32F coachwork, painted in the revised livery, the slab-sided styling bearing a contrast with the curved moulding of the earlier Willowbrook-bodied Fleetlines. It is recorded that the first two Dominators suffered reliability problems, necessitating older buses to be stored as standby vehicles. One can only assume that the problems were solved, as further examples of the type continued to be acquired.

Changes in administration meant that new buses could no longer be registered with the familiar 'FA' prefix. The first batch of two Dominators were registered XRF 22/3S, being numbered 22/3, following-on from the 1973 Fleetlines. The fleet numbers of later Dominators ranged from 27-39.

Once more, the backdrop for PSV photo-shoots, the Town Hall location, was selected by Hestair Dennis, to publicise its latest model, using no 23 as the subject.

Concurrent with the first delivery of Dominators, three new Leyland Atlanteans, to

**Wearing Silver Jubilee Livery, Fleetline no 13 leaves the Horninglow Street depot. The revised colour scheme, with blue top deck instead of green, became the standard livery. (Rosemary Baker)**



AN68A specification, also made their debut in 1978. Carrying identical East Lancashire bodywork, numbers 24-6 were registered XRF 24-6S.

### The wind of change

Later in the 1970s, I have to confess that my interest waned a little. Moving away from the town itself, I tended to take more interest in operators still running older vehicles than those of the then modern Burton, or should I say ESDC fleet.

January 1981 witnessed the final crew-operated service with Daimler CCG5, number 102, the final such purchase, fittingly filling the role.

In 1984, accommodation for the buses, together with all municipal vehicles, was moved from the rather cramped Horninglow Street depot, which had once housed the trams, to a new location in Derby Street, the former site being re-developed to house an extension to the neighbouring law courts. Although all workshop facilities were now available at one location, vehicles remained parked in the open.

For some time, it had seemed to me that, as local people tended to move to new developments in the surrounding villages, the municipal routes should be extended with the possibility of improving passenger receipts.

Approaching the town one afternoon in 1985, I passed, travelling in the opposite direction, a single-decker in ESDC livery, displaying route 11 to Abbots Bromley, on its destination panel – a little further from Burton than I had envisaged, but I later learnt that some re-organisation and extension of routes had occurred.



**Above:** Atlantean no 26, the last Leyland to be supplied to ESDC, battles against winter conditions as it progresses along Station Street, having passed the barrel store of one of the town's breweries.

The bus in question was one of two Bristol RESL6L types with East Lancashire bodies, B47F specification. HTD 324K and STC 890L were new to Darwen in 1971/2 respectively, taking fleet nos 2 and 4. Records show the two Bristols were numbered 48/9 when they joined the ESDC fleet in 1982. A third Bristol augmented the single-deck fleet in 1984. YED 274K, to the same chassis specification, but with East Lancashire DP40F body, had been number 1 in the Warrington fleet when new, in 1971, and retained that number when it moved to Burton.

Apart from one Leyland National 2 demonstrator, undergoing trials in June 1981, I only observed one more vehicle. A

departure from the norm was a Leyland Leopard PSU3A/4R, PJH 453H, with coach body by Plaxton, to C51F specification, new to Clarke's of London in 1970. Becoming number 50, the coach was used on a regular contract to Alfreton each weekday and was purchased in an attempt to attract more private hire business.

With de-regulation in sight, the decision was made to merge the Council Transport Department with Stevensons of Uttoxeter; a small operator that had served routes into Burton for many years. The latter company had the controlling share and, from 1st October 1985, took responsibility for day-to-day operations.

To expedite identity, only the front lower panel of the ESDC buses received attention from Stevenson's bottomless yellow paint pot, together with that company's insignia. The Dennis Dominators were sold immediately and little time seemed to pass before the red, cream and blue had given way to yellow, white and black, followed by some very interesting second-hand purchases.

### Bibliography

- **Burton upon Trent Corporation Transport** – Publication PD12 The Omnibus Society
- **Seventy five Years** – The story of public transport in Burton upon Trent by Peter F Brooks, published by East Staffordshire District Council.
- **Trams and Buses in Burton by David Stanier, Keith West & Linda Stanier** – Carlton Publishing.
- **Bus Lists on the Web.**



**Above:** Clearly displaying the name of its maker, Dominator fleet no 27, the first of the second batch delivered in 1979, collects passengers in Station Street. A contrast in body styling with that of the earlier Fleetlines involved moulding and curvaceous panels being kept to a minimum.

# NEATH STEAM & VINTAGE SHOW

LLWYN FELISH FARM  
CRYNANT, NEATH, SA10 8SP  
(NEXT DOOR TO PREVIOUS SITE)

16<sup>TH</sup> - 17<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2015  
10AM 'TILL 5PM

## Admission:

Adults £5, OAPs £4,  
accompanied children:-  
**FREE**

Popular  
Museum is just  
next door!

- \* Traction Engines & Steam Rollers \* Tractors \* Crawlers \* Lorries \* Fire Engines \* Buses
- \* Cars \* Motorcycles \* Stationary Engines \* Model Tent \* Children's Fairground
- \* Beer Tent & Refreshments \* Trade Stands \* Car Boot Sale \* Auto Jumble



For further details contact

**www.neathsteamandvintageshow.co.uk**

Tel: Ian Davies 07971 167651 Email: [pearldavies2886@btinternet.com](mailto:pearldavies2886@btinternet.com)

## KELSALL STEAM & VINTAGE RALLY 2015

Churches View Farm, Kelsall Road,  
Ashton, Nr. Chester, CH3 8BH (on the A54)  
SATURDAY 27TH & SUNDAY 28 JUNE 2015

THIS HAS BECOME ONE OF THE LARGEST  
DISPLAYS OF COMMERCIAL VEHICLES  
IN THE COUNTRY



ANNUAL ERF GATHERING  
FODEN SOCIETY ATTENDING

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HORTICULTURAL WORKING SECTION  
VINTAGE TRACTOR PULLING  
VINTAGE AUCTION ~ SATURDAY



There will also be:  
Steam Engines, Tractors,  
Classic Cars, Motor Cycles,  
Shire Horses, Stationary Engines,  
Awning Displays, Fair,  
Trade Stands etc ...



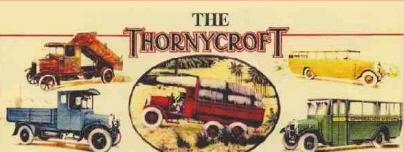
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e mail [kelsallsteamrally@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kelsallsteamrally@hotmail.co.uk)

## Chipping Steam Fair 2015

Sat 23rd, Sun 24th & Mon 25th May



Green Lane Showground, Chipping, Lancs, PR3 2TQ  
Tel. 01995 61866 [www.chippingsteamfair.co.uk](http://www.chippingsteamfair.co.uk)



**Sunday 10th May 2015**

Basingstoke Festival of Transport  
At the War Memorial Park, Basingstoke, RG21 4AH

Free Entrance  
Motorbikes, Cars, Lorries, Buses & Tractors Etc. +100 sales stalls  
For more information contact:  
George Johns, 17 Highfield Chase Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 7SA  
**Tel: 01256 466144**



# FAIRGROUND FUN

*Allan Bedford* was on hand to record the Anderton & Rowland Scammell Showtrac show how it's done.

**B**ad weather is the biggest enemy of the fairground operator, but having a classic Scammell Showtrac to call on can save the day. In July 2012, after an absence of 30 years, Anderton & Rowland returned to Crediton. The fair was set up on part of the rugby field, with its very restricted entrance/exit. By the time the vehicles and rides were due to leave, two weeks of heavy rain had turned parts of the 'tober' into a bog.

Although only a small fair, it took several days and much manpower to pack up. Initially, this big Foden, seen winching another Sandbach Product out of the mire was used. But the following day, the wonderful Scammell Showtrac 'Gladiator' was awoken from retirement at the Dingles Fairground Heritage Collection. With George Devey Senior at the helm, these scenes were recorded, including the proud man happy to pose. Despite all this, A & R returned in July 2013 and spent a glorious fortnight on another part of the field, with improved access also provided.



Above and top of page: This Foden 4350, E767 OWT, was used to help pull some of the artic-based rides out, like this ERF EC and its trailer.



**Above:** With another tractor unit hooked onto the front as an anchor, Gladiator pulls the ride out backwards with its winch.



# 50 Shades of Gillingham

## 20 Pictures of Gillingham

**Jim King** visited the CTP's 17th Great Gillingham Gathering in Dorset on Sunday, 22nd February 2015.

I have seen a few pictures of this event on the internet and thought it must have been held elsewhere, as you can see shafts of sunlight and bright skies over the Gillingham area.

I began the day at Warminster, at around 9 am, as the vehicles arrived, and it was dark and overcast but at least dry.

I was immediately impressed at the sight of Mark Allen's 1947 AEC Mammoth Major, JNY 484, as he had driven it here last year as a rolling chassis/cab restoration. This year it had progressed into a liveried platform lorry and drag and Mark informs me that the painting and sign-writing was only carried out a few days earlier. It remained parked up on tick-over, as he had experienced trouble with the batteries that morning. I discovered later that he did not make it any further than Warminster.

Another splendid restoration over the past twelve months was Ray Tuck's 1959 ERF 54G, XLO 975, now transformed from last years scruffy appearance, sporting a fresh Union Cartage livery, as seen in the last issue. Well done Ray, proper job. You could be forgiven for thinking that Dave Jones has cloned his bright orange 1973 Bedford TK (TUY 345L) as you see this lorry absolutely everywhere. He had put a couple of hours work in on Sunday before driving down from the West Midlands to attend this gathering as for him distance is no issue.

I repositioned myself at the top of the hill at Kingston Deverill and, although it was still dark and overcast, I was cheered up by the sight of



Above: The 1952 Rutland M4, 678 UXJ, seen at Kingston Deverill.

a few rare lorries that I had personally not seen before. They included a 1952 Rutland M4, 678 UXJ, and a 1956 Commer Superpoise, XNW 186. I have no history of the Rutland but I believe the Commer changed hands at a Cheffins auction in Cambridge around April last year. It now looks resplendent in its new Somerset Transport colours.

Added to these was a 1957 Austin K9, CSJ 525, and a superb 1946 Commer, CUJ 681, that looked as if it was just doing a day's work. Where have all these smashing vehicles been hiding?

Full marks to their owners for bringing them out in all weathers. On arrival at Gillingham around 11 am, the place was rammed with vehicles and the atrocious weather conditions were not going to deter this hardy bunch of enthusiasts.

You may remember Simon Beveridge's 1988 Seddon Atkinson, F869 JFE, from the Lincolnshire area, which is now owned by Steve Martin from Warminster who intends to rally it and use it for his own business use. My choice of the day was the handsomely turned out 1966 Guy Warrior, DTM 468D, as these seem few and far between these days.

Thanks must go as ever to John Pomeroy, Mary Bailey and Geoff Ridler and the others of Commercial Transport in Preservation (CTP) for putting on such a well attended event and their motto of "History on the Move" was well displayed today. Also a special thanks to Nick Baker for allowing his premises to be used for the occasion.

My last thoughts go to Mark Allen, who after a lot of time and effort never made it to the final destination. Let us not forget the enormous amount of work carried out and money spent by these classic vehicle owners for the pleasure of us all. Despite the many shades of grey sky, if this gathering is the yardstick for the rest of the year it is one worth looking forward to. A safe and care-free rally season to everyone for 2015.



Above: The 1946 Commer, CUJ 681, looking as if it was in the middle of a day's work at Warminster.



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1: A 1979 Seddon Atkinson 400 four-wheeler with a cattle body, DGS 361T, on the run at Kingston Deverill. 2: Jim's favourite of the day, DTM 468D, a 1966 Guy Warrior, of J N Gilbey & Sons of Wincanton, Somerset, seen at Warminster. 3: Looking very smart at Kingston Deverill was GAN 418, the 1953 Albion Chieftain FT37 of Brian Chivers of Devizes, Wiltshire, followed by TJI 1258, the 1982-registered Bedford TJ of Weeks Commercials of Frome, Somerset. 4: GX 9363, the 1932 Scammell showmans tractor, named 'The Leader', of B Cole & Sons Fun Fairs. 5: The 1956 Commer Superpoise, XNW 186, now in the livery of W H Selway & Sons of Paulton, Bristol, leads the way at Kingston Deverill. 6: One of the smaller vehicles at Gillingham was this 1953 Morris Minor Van, OHP 900, a well-restored early example. 7: A 1975 Bedford J Type, JYO 508N, seen passing through Warminster. 8: JNY 484, the 1947 AEC Mammoth Major of Mark Allen of Bradford-on-Avon, now restored in Rosser of Pontlliw livery, at Warminster, with organiser John Pomeroy's 1937 Albion CL122, DXK 851.

# Here's looking at Yew HCVS looking at Yew

**Jim King** was at the HCVS South Midlands Commercial Vehicle Gathering, at Yew Tree Garden Centre, Newbury, Berkshire, on Sunday 8th March 2015.

**M**any will already know that Mac's Café on the A4 at Padworth, Berkshire is no longer there, as owner Raff Vigliotti succumbed to pressure to move out for the development of much needed housing in the area. It was a sad day for classic lorry enthusiasts and especially for the South Midlands Area of the Historic Commercial Vehicle Society (HCVS) who held their annual Bacon Butty Bash at the café. I am sure we would all like to thank Raff for all the support that he has given to the classic vehicle movement and wish him well for the future.

John & Janet Ayre of the HCVS set about the difficult task of finding another nearby location that would receive some 50 heavy classic vehicles

on a Sunday morning. Fortunately, Doug & Claire Hall of The Yew Tree Garden Centre at Ball Hill, Newbury, Berkshire allowed the inaugural Commercial Vehicle Gathering was able to take place on Sunday 8th March at their premises. It might not have the transport café atmosphere, but everything else was positive.

Much more room, plenty of hard standing for the heavies and a smashing café, catering for all tastes and requirements. There was plenty for everyone to see and do, as well as the splendid number of entrants who turned up for the occasion.

John Ayre could be forgiven for the slightly forlorn look on his face, nothing to do with his responsibilities as host, but because he threw a

valve on his 1952 Morris Commercial LC3 (627 XUK) on arrival and it would need a piggyback back home. Many of the old Mac's stalwarts attended this new venue, but I was very pleased to see Bob Dulieu arrive in his 1978 Seddon Atkinson 400, BUR 468T, and trailer, in Waitrose livery as there was plenty of space to collect a few snaps of this wonderful restoration.

Everyone seemed to approve of the new location including the visitors to the garden centre who were impressed with the extra motor show, while the owners were pleased with the overall effect and I hope this will become an annual event. Well done John and Janet and the HCVS South Midlands Area; hope to see you here next year!



1: John & Janet Ayre of Radnage, BRD 679C 1965 Morris Minor. Peter Chew of Cookham, Berks. Buckinghamshire, arriving at the HCVS Gathering, at Yew Tree Garden Centre, Newbury, Berkshire, in 627 XUK (originally MLH 12), their 1952 Post Office Telephones Morris Commercial LC3, which unfortunately was about to break down.

2: A 1965 Bedford RL in AFS livery, LSJ 450, with 201 YUN, an ex-military AEC Matador timber tractor.

3: A 1965 Morris Minor pick-up, BRD 679C, leads a Ford 300E van, 7254 NX, into the Yew Tree Garden Centre.

4: CBV 161, a 1948 Thornycroft Nippy HF-ER4, and DDL 156, an earlier style 1942 Thornycroft Nippy, parked at the garden centre.

5: Making the most of the spacious parking area are WMT 592, a 1951 Ford Thames ET6, TDP 621H, a Ford Transit pick-up, 945 URF, a Foden S20 eight-wheeled platform lorry, Leyland Reiver, JDP 727L, and Atkinson Borderer, VPG 235G, of May's Motors.

# Classic Light Commercials at Malvern

## CLASSIC LIGHT COMMERCIALS AT MALVERN

**Barry Fenn** went to the Classic Commercial Show at Malvern on Saturday, 7th March, 2015, and saw some interesting light commercials among all the bigger lorries.

The Malvern spring show enjoyed a warm and sunny day for a change, for what many see as the season-opening show. There were plenty of lorries on display, but it seemed a good opportunity to focus on the lighter vehicles present.

**1:** A Well-restored Standard 10 pick-up, 406 KNP (Worcester, 1963), next to the latest restoration of a Bedford 'O' Type with dropsides, in the R C Jefferies preserved fleet.

**2:** An extremely smart-looking Ford 300E 7 cwt van, complete with chrome Prefect-style grille and headlamp surrounds, 919 KNU (Derbyshire, 1959)

**3:** Perhaps not everybody's cup-of-tea, but this Bedford Rascal represents a type of vehicle popular for some years. F774 KNC, registered in Manchester in 1988-89, but now used by a Gloucestershire owner, complete with matching trailer...

**4:** Not a British classic, but this 1947 Hudson pick-up makes a rare and beautiful sight anywhere.



# Dewsbury Bus Museum - Spring Open Day 2015

*Les Addy visited the event and reports back.*



**Above:** A Guy Wulfrunian, new to West Riding in 1963. The bus is undergoing restoration, and will eventually appear in the West Riding former tram route livery of red and white. The Museum is also home to another Wulfrunian, one of two bought by County Motors of Lepton, and acquired by West Riding when it took County over. The original County colours of cream and blue were superceded by West Riding green, but the blue moquette seats still survive.

The bus museum is in fact in Ravensthorpe, about two miles out of Dewsbury. It is home to around a dozen buses, while there are others in other sites, which have been brought together to preserve the buses of West Riding Automobile Co and others in the West Yorkshire area. The Dewsbury open days have grown in stature during the last few years, and the events attract many enthusiasts and locals who can admire the buses, ride on some of them on tours around the district, and visit the sales stalls in the garage itself. The resident buses are moved to a nearby site for display, and are joined by several visiting buses.

**Right:** The Heavy Mob. An impressive brace of heavy duty breakdown and recovery trucks, an ERF and an AEC, look ready to take up their duties



**Right:** Ex Todmorden Joint Omnibus Committee Leyland Leopard, acquired by them in 1967, and later incorporated into the Halifax fleet. On formation of The West Yorkshire PTE, the bus received its green and cream livery but, upon withdrawal, it reverted back to Todmorden colours of dark green and ivory.

**Below:** A First Halifax Wright bodied Volvo is squeezed into a tight parking space. The bus wears an up-dated version of the old Halifax Corporation colours of orange, green and cream, and bears the name Geoffrey Hilditch, who was the General Manager of the town's bus fleet in the 1960s.



**Above:** A Southdown Queen Mary, new in 1965. It later passed to a Co Durham independent, before being acquired by Wallace Arnold, who used it in Torquay and Leeds, after converting it to an open topper. It was sold for preservation, and is now available for private hires. This bus was the subject of a superb Corgi OOC model, as a Wallace Arnold open-topper. **Below right:** A splendid Lancashire United Leyland Tiger TS8 in wartime mode, with window protectors.



**Left:** The star of the show. A 1949 Crossley, new to Baxters of Aidrie in Scotland. The bus was bought in 1953 by local independent, Joseph Wood of Mirfield, and used on its Dewsbury-The Knowl-Mirfield route. The bus was re-bodied by Roe in 1954, and ran in daily service until withdrawal in 1967. The Crossley remained in the company's garage in Mirfield and was restored in 1999, before being sold to Quantock Motors for preservation. The bus has recently been acquired by a local enthusiast, and is now part of the museum's collection. On the Open Day, this splendid Crossley gave rides to the general public, re-tracing its steps, running on its old route.

# Rally Diary

*A selection of events being held during the coming month which will be of interest to Vintage Roadscene readers*

The 2015 rally season is up and running now, so here are the events scheduled to take place while this issue of the magazine is current. If you're organising an event which would be of interest to Vintage Roadscene readers, please let us know the details for future diary pages,

and we apologise if we've missed any out.

Let us hope the weather is kind and everyone enjoys their days out, wherever they go. Don't forget to take your camera and if you see anything interesting, send us a picture for our future Rally Scene pages...

## APRIL

**18-19 April – Sandbach Transport Festival**, The Commons, Sandbach town centre, Cheshire CW11 1EG, 01270 766238  
e-mail: philbateam@hotmail.com  
[www.sandbachtransportfestival.co.uk](http://www.sandbachtransportfestival.co.uk)

**18-19 April – Colne Valley Vintage Rally**, Colne Valley Railway, Yeldham Road, Castle Hedingham, Essex CO9 3DZ, 01787 461174  
e-mail: cvrshop@googlemail.com  
[www.colnevalleyrailway.co.uk](http://www.colnevalleyrailway.co.uk)

**18-19 April – Weekend Trolley Days**, The Trolleybus Museum, Belton Road, Sandtoft DN8 5SX, 01724 711391  
e-mail: trolleybusmuseum@sandtoft.org  
[www.sandtoft.org](http://www.sandtoft.org)

**18-19 April – Horses at Beamish**, Beamish Museum, Stanley, Co Durham DH9 0RG, 0191 370 4000  
e-mail: museum@beamish.org.uk  
[www.beamish.org.uk](http://www.beamish.org.uk)

**18-19 April – Stoke Prior Vintage Gathering**, Stoke Prior Sports and Country Club, Westonhall Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4AL, 01527 575003  
e-mail: keithshakespeare@aol.com  
[www.shakespearesrally.com](http://www.shakespearesrally.com)

**19 April – Spring Gathering, London Bus Museum**, Cobham Hall, Brooklands Road, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0SL, 01932 837994  
e-mail: londonbusmuseum@btinternet.com  
[www.londonbusmuseum.com](http://www.londonbusmuseum.com)

**19 April – Garstang Autojumble**, Hamilton House Farm, A586 off A6, Garstang, Preston, Lancashire PR3 0TB, 07836 331324  
e-mail: info@garstangautojumbles.co.uk  
[www.garstangautojumbles.co.uk](http://www.garstangautojumbles.co.uk)

**22-26 April – Old King Coal**, Beamish Museum, Stanley, Co Durham DH90RG, 0191 370 4000  
e-mail: museum@beamish.org.uk  
[www.beamish.org.uk](http://www.beamish.org.uk)

**23 April – Access All Areas**, The Tank Museum, Bovington, Dorset BH20 6JG, 01929 405096  
e-mail: info@tankmuseum.org  
[www.tankmuseum.org](http://www.tankmuseum.org)

**25 April – Camborne Trevithick Day**, streets of Camborne, Cornwall TR14, 07501 436091

**25 April – Bus and Commercial Vehicle Rally**, Quorn & Woodhouse Station, Great Central Railway, Leics, 07891 071908  
e-mail: info@ltht.org.uk  
[www.ltht.org.uk](http://www.ltht.org.uk)

**25 April – Lincoln Autojumble**, former RAF base, Hemswell, Lincolnshire DN221 5TJ, 07816 291544  
e-mail: lincolnautojumble@hotmail.co.uk  
[www.lincolnautojumble.com](http://www.lincolnautojumble.com)

**25-26 April – Westbury Transport & Vintage Gathering**, Top Field, Flowers Farm, Westbury Road B3098, Bratton, Westbury Wiltshire BA13 4TT, 01373 864166  
e-mail: keith@flowersfarm.wanadoo.co.uk

**25-26 April – Ackworth Scammell Spectacular & Historic Vehicle Show**, Ackworth Water Tower, A628 Ackworth Road, Pontefract, Yorkshire WF9 1AX, 01977 617327  
e-mail: brickyardorganic@yahoo.co.uk

**25-26 April – Mid-Suffolk Show**, Stonham Barns Showground, Pettaugh Road, Stonham Aspal, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 6AT, 01449 711111  
e-mail: grace@stonham-barns.co.uk  
[www.stonham-barns.co.uk](http://www.stonham-barns.co.uk)

**25-26 April – Museum Depot Open Weekend**, London Transport Museum Depot, 118-120 Gunnersbury Lane, Acton, London W3 9BQ 0207 565 7298  
e-mail: bookings@ltmuseum.co.uk  
[www.ltmuseum.co.uk](http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk)

**25-26 April – Riverside Steam Rally**, Riverside Holiday Park, Southport New Road, Banks, Lancashire PR9 8DF, 07831 495400 e-mail: alanatki2@aol.com  
[www.riversidesteamrally.co.uk](http://www.riversidesteamrally.co.uk)



**26 April – King Edward Mine Open Day**, King Edward Mine Museum, Troon, Camborne, Cornwall TR14 9DP, 01209 614681

e-mail: maureen@jgilbert.eclipse.co.uk  
[www.kingedwardmine.co.uk](http://www.kingedwardmine.co.uk)

**26 April – Newbury 4 x 4 & Vintage Spares Day**, Newbury Showground, Chieveley, Berkshire RG18 9QZ, 01697 451882  
e-mail: info@markwoodwardclassicevents.com  
[www.4x4sparesday.co.uk](http://www.4x4sparesday.co.uk)

**26 April – BPPC Vehicle Road Run**, starts – The Red Shoot, Linwood, Ringwood, Hampshire BH24 3QT, 07979 733719  
e-mail: bppcltd@btinternet.com  
[www.bppcltd.co.uk](http://www.bppcltd.co.uk)

**26 April – The Cheshire Run, start – Poplar 2000 Services**, Lymm, M6 J20, Cheshire WA13 0SP, 01925 652647  
e-mail: thecheshirerun@hotmail.com

## MAY

**1-4 May – Abbey Hill Steam Rally**, Yeovil Showground, Dorchester Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9RA, 01935 863199  
e-mail: secreatery@abbeyhillrally.co.uk  
[www.abbeyhillrally.co.uk](http://www.abbeyhillrally.co.uk)

**2 May – Tiger Day, The Tank Museum**, Bovington, Dorset BH20 6JG, 01929 405096  
e-mail: info@tankmuseum.org  
[www.tankmuseum.org](http://www.tankmuseum.org)

**2 May – Emergency Services Railway Day**, Abbey Pumping Station Museum, Corporation Road, Leicester LE4 5PX, 0116 299 5113  
e-mail: andrew.simpson@leicester.gov.uk  
[www.abbeypumpingstation.org](http://www.abbeypumpingstation.org)

**2-3 May – Monmouth Steam & Vintage Show**, Monmouth Showground, Vauxhall Fields, Monmouth NP25 5BA, 07966 117936  
e-mail: floss456@aol.com  
[www.bordercountiesvintageclub.co.uk](http://www.bordercountiesvintageclub.co.uk)

Please check details with organisers before travelling long distances. Vintage Roadscene publishes this listing in good faith and cannot be held responsible for any changes or inaccuracies in the information given.

**2-3 May –Magnificent Motors Eastbourne,** Eastern Seafront & Princes Park, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 7PR, 01323 410000 [www.magnificanmotors.co.uk](http://www.magnificanmotors.co.uk)

**2-4 May –Macmillan Tractor & Stationary Engine Rally,** John Marshall's Yard, Main Road, Kingsley, Bordon, Hampshire GU35 9LW, 01420 474298

**2-4 May –Merton Vintage Show,** Faversham Showground, Staple Street, Faversham, Kent ME13 9HY, 01227 731473 e-mail: [jamie.butterfield@btinternet.com](mailto:jamie.butterfield@btinternet.com) [www.mertonvintageshow.co.uk](http://www.mertonvintageshow.co.uk)

**2-4 May – Llandudno Transport Festival,** Bodafon Fields, Llandudno, Conwy LL30 1BW, 01492 545053 [www.llantransfest.co.uk](http://www.llantransfest.co.uk)

**2-4 May – Weekend Trolley Days,** The Trolleybus Museum, Belton Road, Sandtoft DN8 5SX, 01724 711391 e-mail: [trolleybusmuseum@sandtoft.org](mailto:trolleybusmuseum@sandtoft.org) [www.sandtoft.org](http://www.sandtoft.org)

**2-4 May –Firpark 999 Show, FirPark Farm,** FirPark, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire LN8 3YL, 07816 326368 e-mail: [firparkairport@live.co.uk](mailto:firparkairport@live.co.uk)

**2-4 May – 37th Rushden Cavalcade of Historical Transport,** A6 Bedford Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire NN10 0SN, 01933 315006 e-mail: [bjw@uwclub.net](mailto:bjw@uwclub.net) [www.cavalcade.org.uk](http://www.cavalcade.org.uk)

**3 May – 17th Catton Hall Classic Car & Transport Show,** Catton Hall, Alrewas, near Lichfield, Staffordshire DE12 8LN, 01922 643385 e-mail: [transtar@talk21.com](mailto:transtar@talk21.com) [www.transtarpromotions.com](http://www.transtarpromotions.com)

**3 May –Fleetwood Classic Vehicle Show,** Old Ferry Terminal, Dock Road, Fleetwood FY7 16JU, 01253 865901 e-mail: [bvpg29@yahoo.com](mailto:bvpg29@yahoo.com) [www.bvpgco.uk](http://www.bvpgco.uk)

**3 May – Lambourne Spring Show,** Lambourne Woodlands, Hungerford, Berkshire RG17 7RY, 07799 114714 e-mail: [stephanie@hyperiontravel.co.uk](mailto:stephanie@hyperiontravel.co.uk)

**3 May –16th Abingdon Air & Country Show,** Abingdon Airfield, off Barrow Road, Shippon, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX13 6JQ, 07769 689823 e-mail: [smithoag@aol.com](mailto:smithoag@aol.com) [www.abingdonairandcountry.co.uk](http://www.abingdonairandcountry.co.uk)

**3 May – 54th London to Brighton Historic Commercial Vehicle Run, starts –** Crystal Palace, 7-9am, finish – Madeira Drive 10am-5pm. [www.hcvs.co.uk](http://www.hcvs.co.uk)

**3 May – 45th Ipswich to Felixstowe Historic Vehicle Run,** starts – Christchurch Park, Ipswich, finish – The Promenade, Felixstowe, 01473 715666 e-mail: [enquiries@ipswichtransportmuseum.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ipswichtransportmuseum.co.uk) [www.ipswichtransportmuseum.co.uk](http://www.ipswichtransportmuseum.co.uk)

**3 May – Ripon Spring Classic Vehicle Show & Jumble,** Ripon Racecourse, Boroughbridge Road, Ripon, Yorkshire HG4 1UG, 01697 451882 e-mail: [info@markwoodwardclassicevents.com](mailto:info@markwoodwardclassicevents.com) [www.markwoodwardclassicevents.com](http://www.markwoodwardclassicevents.com)

**3-May – Steam Up, Fornett Industrial Steam Museum,** Low Road, Fornett St Mary, Norfolk NR16 1JJ, 01508 488277 e-mail: [forcettsteammuseum@gmail.com](mailto:forcettsteammuseum@gmail.com) [www.forcettsteammuseum.com](http://www.forcettsteammuseum.com)

**3 May – Spring Rally,** Twyford Waterworks, Hazeley Road, Twyford, Winchester, Hampshire SO21 1QA, 01962 714716 e-mail: [enquiries@twyfordwaterworks.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@twyfordwaterworks.co.uk) [www.twyfordwaterworks.co.uk](http://www.twyfordwaterworks.co.uk)

**3 May – Vintage, Veteran & Classic Motor-cycle Show,** Amberley Museum & Heritage Centre, Staion Road, Amberley, near Arundel, West Sussex BN18 9LT, 01798 831370 e-mail: [office@amberleymuseum.co.uk](mailto:office@amberleymuseum.co.uk) [www.amberleymuseum.co.uk](http://www.amberleymuseum.co.uk)

**3 May –Classic Vehicle Rally & Country Fayre,** Earsham Hall, Bungay, Suffolk NR35 2AN, 07599 935113 e-mail: [michaegardiner@hotmail.com](mailto:michaegardiner@hotmail.com) [www.bungaylions.org.uk](http://www.bungaylions.org.uk)

**3-4 May – Truckfest Peterborough,** East of England Showground, Alwalton, Peterborough PE2 6XE, 01775 768661 e-mail: [info@livepromotions.co.uk](mailto:info@livepromotions.co.uk) [www.livepromotions.co.uk](http://www.livepromotions.co.uk)

**3-4 May – Sunderland Steam Spectacular,** Herrington Country Park, A183 Penshaw Monument, Tyne & Wear, 07583 075016 e-mail: [info@theeventsorganiser.co.uk](mailto:info@theeventsorganiser.co.uk) [www.theeventsorganiser.co.uk](http://www.theeventsorganiser.co.uk)

**3-4 May – Shanes Castle May Day Steam Rally,** Shanes Castle Estate, Antrim, Co Antrim BT41 4NE, 02894 464648 e-mail: [walteramcneill@hotmail.com](mailto:walteramcneill@hotmail.com) [www.shaescastlesteamgroup.com](http://www.shaescastlesteamgroup.com)

**3-4 May –39th Stradsett Park Vintage Rally,** Stradsett, Kings Lynn, Norfolk PE33 9HA, 01945 880091 e-mail: [stradsett@nvtex-ea.org.uk](mailto:stradsett@nvtex-ea.org.uk) [www.nvtex-ea.org.uk/rally](http://www.nvtex-ea.org.uk/rally)

**3-4 May – Bakewell Showground Spectacular,** Bakewell, Derbyshire DE45 1AQ, 07770 993769 e-mail: [info@spectacularweekend.com](mailto:info@spectacularweekend.com) [www.spectacularweekend.com](http://www.spectacularweekend.com)

**3-4 May – Hampshire Country Fair, Netley Marsh Showground,** near Southampton SO40 7GY, 01283 820548 e-mail: [info@livingheritagecountryshows.com](mailto:info@livingheritagecountryshows.com) [www.livingheritagecountryshows.com](http://www.livingheritagecountryshows.com)

**4 May – Singleton Park Classic Car Show,** Swansea, Glamorgan SA2 8PS, 01792 362281 e-mail: [muckles19@ntlworld.com](mailto:muckles19@ntlworld.com) [www.swanseahistoricvehiclereserve.co.uk](http://www.swanseahistoricvehiclereserve.co.uk)

**4 May – Bill Quay Carnival & Vintage Rally,** Brack Terrace, Bill Quay, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear NE10 0UE, 0191 489 3117 e-mail: [dfoster393@btinternet.com](mailto:dfoster393@btinternet.com)

**9-10 May – Chacewater Vintage Rally,** Killifreth Hill, Chacewater, Cornwall TR4 8NB, 07962 672034 e-mail: [ihi.414@btinternet.com](mailto:ihi.414@btinternet.com)

**9-10 May –Nottinghamshire County Show,** Newark Showground, Nottinghamshire NG24 2NY, 01636 705796 e-mail: [show@newarkshowground.com](mailto:show@newarkshowground.com) [www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com](http://www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com)

**9-10 May – Tractor Weekend,** Old Goods Shed, Market Bosworth Station, Leicestershire CV13 0PE 07870 757020 e-mail: [tractors@battlefield-line-railway.co.uk](mailto:tractors@battlefield-line-railway.co.uk) [www.battlefieldline.co.uk](http://www.battlefieldline.co.uk)

**9-10 May – Bronte Vintage Gathering,** Haworth Road, B6144, Cullingworth, near Bradford, Yorkshire BD13 5EE, 01535 275535 e-mail: [enquiries@bronte-vintage-gathering.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@bronte-vintage-gathering.co.uk) [www.bronte-vintage-gathering.co.uk](http://www.bronte-vintage-gathering.co.uk)

**9-10 May – Saffron Walden Crank-up,** Sparrows Hill Livery, Sparrowsend Hill, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3TU, 07882 175438 w-mail: [swcrankup@gmail.com](mailto:swcrankup@gmail.com) [www.swcrankup.co.uk](http://www.swcrankup.co.uk)

**9-10 May – Stotfold Mill Steam Fair & Country Show,** Mill Lane Stotfold, Hitchin, Bedfordshire SG5 4NU, 01462 734541 e-mail: [enquires@stotfoldmill.com](mailto:enquires@stotfoldmill.com) [www.stotfoldmill.com](http://www.stotfoldmill.com)

**10 May - Spring Vintage Fayre,** Amberley Museum & Heritage Centre, Station Road, Amberley, near Arundel, West Sussex BN18 9LT, 01798 831370 e-mail: [office@amberleymuseum.co.uk](mailto:office@amberleymuseum.co.uk) [www.amberleymuseum.co.uk](http://www.amberleymuseum.co.uk)

**10 May –Basingstoke Festival of Transport,** War Memorial Park, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 4AG, 01256 468421

**10 May – Taunton Vintage Bus Display & Running Day,** Castle Green, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4AD, 01823 442589 e-mail: [tauntonrunningday@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tauntonrunningday@yahoo.co.uk) [www.tauntonrunningday.wordpress.com](http://www.tauntonrunningday.wordpress.com)

**10 May – Spring Transport Show,** The British Commercial Vehicle Museum, King Street, Leyland, Lancashire PR25 2LE, 01772 451011 e-mail: [enquiries@bcvmt.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@bcvmt.co.uk) [www.bcvmt.co.uk](http://www.bcvmt.co.uk)

# EARLS COURT MEMORIES

**John Seale** follows up our feature on Earls Court with some memories of his own...

**O**n the subject of Earl's Court and the bi-annual Commercial Vehicle Show, I attended my first one in 1966 as an Apprentice Draughtsman with Metropolitan Cammell Weymann Ltd. Draughtsmen and Buyers were given Railway Warrants which covered the train journey and tube fare to and from Earls Court.

When I arrived I was filled with excitement about looking at the shiny commercials lined up outside in the demonstration park and comparing the offerings of your competitors against what you were working on.

I remember being slightly disappointed by the condition of the exhibition hall building. It had seen better days and had the appearance of being 'patched up'. However, the bright banners on the outside did their best to cover up the obvious signs of decay and decline.

For the bus engineer, this show was dominated by the rear engine high capacity single deckers which with one man operation only being legal on single deckers at that time appeared to be the future for the bus industry. Therefore brochures and technical specifications of Daimler Roadliner, AEC Swift, Leyland Panther, etc were high on my list of requirements.

1966 also saw the re-entry of the Bristol marque into the general bus market, after a substantial share-holding had been acquired by the Leyland Motor Corporation; therefore the Bristol RE was of interest to me too. Besides this, there was a very unusual bus on the Bristol stand the VRLL with an engine located at its off-side rear corner, designed to take single or double deck bodywork. This seemed a leap away from the Lodekka that was still in production at that time.

All manufacturers displaying at the show preferred a well known name customer endorsing their product. This was true of both truck and bus producers. Tyre manufacturers would send a man round to paint their name in gold or white, as appropriate onto the highly glossy black faces of the tyres to give that concours look. In later years an adhesive label sufficed but did not look as effective.

My employer was exhibiting a Leyland Atlantean in blue and white BOAC livery on its stand, a contract originally taken by our partner company, Weymann, which had just closed after a prolonged industrial dispute.

Having spent my day looking at all that was on offer, I returned to the MCW stand to see a large banner had been put across its entrance proclaiming that London Transport had placed an order for 650 single deck buses! We were going to be busy for some time to come.

The Commercial Vehicle Show had been an event



Metropolitan Cammell Weymann was showing this Leyland Atlantean in blue and white BOAC livery, sister to LYF 307D, to be seen at Brooklands, on its stand at the 1966 Commercial Vehicle Show, the first attended by John Seale with the company. (CHC abm438)

I had been aware of since 1960, as my great aunt was a cleaner at the Fort Dunlop offices and she used to bring copies of 'Commercial Motor' home for me to read that had been put in the waste bin. The best for me were the Earls Court Show editions and I still have these.

Imagine as a teenager being interested in a career in large vehicle manufacturing and reading those magazines, never imagining that I would eventually attend as an employee of an exhibitor.

The 1968 Show, I recall, was dominated by the newly-created British Leyland Motor Corporation. BLMC badges seemed to be sprouting everywhere. These were stuck over the old well known manufacturers logos where possible. One felt that this was the beginning of the end for many of the names and products we had grown to love. It was

obvious even to a business naïve twenty year old that you could not have three separate factories making three different rear engine double deck chassis, but that is what BLMC did.

One of the stars of the show was the Leyland gas turbine truck developed from the famous Rover gas turbine car technology of the 1950s. Rover was now part of BLMC.

There was a ramp over the truck and you had to queue to get on the ramp to look at it. Suddenly there was almost a stampede to get off the ramp. What had happened is that a very attractive girl – she must have been a model – in the shortest mini dress I had seen up until then, walked past and everybody was following her. I remember the dress was a shimmering silver and its one of those moments that is etched in the mind forever. The gas

turbine truck was forgotten in that moment; as it turned out that is where history left it too.

As you walked through the show entrance a giant double decker bus stood on the Daimler stand in an unfamiliar colour scheme. It did not have the familiar engine 'bustle' of the Fleetline but a straight back end with banks of louvres. A doorway at the front and one at the extreme rear with two staircases and a closed circuit TV for the driver to monitor the rear platform, all futuristic stuff.

The bus was a one off CRC6-36 model a sort of cross between the Fleetline and the Roadliner built for the South African market. Johannesburg bought 16, but this one was for Walsall Corporation and was its last 'Show Special', as from the following year the corporation's bus services became part of West Midlands PTE.

Walsall's General Manager, Ronald Edgley Cox had always planned to have something unusual at each Show since he took over at Walsall in the early 1950s. This was his 'swansong'.

The CRC6-36 was the first double deck service bus in the UK to be built to the new maximum dimensions of 11m (36'-0"). It seated 86 and was powered by the controversial Cummins V6 engine that powered Daimler's Roadliner model, placed in the rear offside corner under the second staircase.

At the time, some in the industry questioned Edgley Cox's state of mind, as he had standardized in Walsall on his short front overhang Daimler Fleetlines and, with the CRC6-36, he was going to the other extreme. But he was canny and it was Daimler who paid for the bus, so perhaps the non-standard livery was chosen by them in case

they wanted to use it as a demonstrator?

The bus faced rearwards to the main concourse, so I walked around to the front expecting something dramatic in styling but was disappointed to see a very plain front end, with a radiator grille of mesh that reminded me of the wartime Daimler CWA model. The headlights were inboard rather than outboard as on the Walsall Fleetlines.

I just had the impression that someone at Daimler had contacted Northern Counties, the body manufacturer, and told them not to bother too much with the design, as Edgley was getting a 'freebie'.

Some of the MCW staff who visited Earls Court were not necessarily there to look at the vehicle displays. Some were famed for going there to get rolling drunk on the stands of component suppliers and this seemed to be accepted as at least they stayed at the show. I often wondered how they got home.

Many decided to 'show their faces', then quickly disappear to enjoy the delights of Soho and in particular 'Raymond's Revue Bar' and the scantily-clad girls who performed there.

Senior management could hardly have been deaf and must have heard the tales of who was the drunkest and who had tried to get on the stage and dance with the strippers. But somehow nobody got into trouble over it. Such stories regaled the office for a couple of weeks afterwards. Thank goodness it only took place every other year.

I am no prude, but was genuinely interested in the vehicles on display. This was the start of my career and I thought that if the company was good enough to give me a day off and pay my travel costs then I should do my best to give something back.

The men who built the MCW exhibits had little opportunity to attend the show, as it was seen to be very much a staff 'perk'. Some foremen attended, but shop floor staff only had the opportunity if an exhibit needed finishing off on the stand prior to the show. Buses for exhibition were labelled in the factory and only the most skilled teams selected to work on them.

The 1970 show was the launch pad for the much-heralded Leyland National and I must admit working for a company that put bus bodies on chassis almost exclusively from the British Leyland sources, this made me a little concerned about my future prospects, especially as I had just completed my five year apprenticeship.

However, although BLMC had a captive market in the newly created National Bus Company, or so it thought, the also newly-created Passenger Transport Executives saw their future requirements being met by large capacity one man operated double-deckers.

MCW had started a commercial relationship with Scania-Vabis of Sweden in 1969, just before it moved from Elmdon back to its pre-1947 home at Washwood Heath. The first fruits of this relationship were the introduction of the Metro-Scania single

'prickly' elderly man who was a foreman at our competitor Park Royal. He told me that our buses were rubbish and that theirs were a lot better. In such circumstances you have to be diplomatic, so I offered him a drink. He wanted whisky and so got him a large glass, at which his eyes lit up. As he sipped the whisky, he gradually became a lot friendlier and when he finished the glass he asked if he could have another. I was happy to oblige him. When he had downed this, he was my best friend and thought our products were wonderful. He staggered from the stand and I wondered if he would be in trouble with his 'other half' when he arrived home. Another convert to the MCW cause!

It was here that I met the charismatic Godfrey Chesson, a former Weymann salesman, who had been brought in for show duty. Godfrey was a salesman of the 'old school', happily chatting to senior executives of the major bus operators and young children alike, who appeared late in the afternoon after they had finished school. He treated everybody as equals.

Godfrey liked a drink and knew his limits as he would not imbibe until five in the afternoon.

The evening usually consisted of a show in the West End, with prospective customers if they were staying over, followed by a visit to a drinking club.

Therefore Godfrey had to survive the evening, so daytime drinking was avoided. However, as the afternoon at Earls Court wore on Godfrey would continually be checking his watch with mine, the

closer 5pm approached, and get his first drink of the day.

Senior salesmen and managers stayed at one of the swankier hotels near Earls Court and people like me stayed at a hotel that was at the lower end of the market.

One morning Godfrey told me that a young lady had been knocking on his door the night before at his 'posh' hotel. When he opened the door, the attractive girl asked if there was anything she could do for him? After a heavy night of drinking, he told her that in his condition he could not raise a smile and certainly not anything else, but he thanked her for calling.

One day, I was asked to buy tickets for one of the evening shows given a pile of cash and told to hire a taxi go to the theatre, buy about twenty tickets and come back.

The taxi driver took me for a tour of the city, with a drive past Buckingham Palace to the West End. There, he waited for me and returned me to Earls Court after purchasing the tickets.

If customers were not stopping for the evening the stand staff had the opportunity to go to the theatre instead. So that is how I got to see 'Jesus Christ Superstar', with the original London cast soon after it opened in 1972.

In 1974, I was asked to go to the show again and work on the sales stand.

MCW had survived the early British Leyland years, being busy with large contracts for double-deckers and, at the end of the previous year, had launched the double-deck version of the Metro-Scania, which was called Metropolitan.

The Metropolitan was a greater sales success than its single-deck equivalent, but did not attract

## THE 1972 SHOW WAS VERY SPECIAL FOR ME, AS I WAS INVITED TO JOIN THE SALES TEAM ON THE MCW STAND AS 'TECHNICAL ADVISOR' AND SPEND THE WHOLE SHOW THERE.

deck bus, an example of which appeared on our stand in the colours of Leicester City Transport.

At this time, the industry was not familiar with 'foreign' products and there was more than a little xenophobia from some of the more traditional operators.

The 1972 show was very special for me, as I was invited to join the sales team on the MCW stand as 'Technical Advisor' and spend the whole show there.

I had got to know Derek Parker, the Sales Office Manager and son of Birmingham City Transport's former Chief Engineer, H Parker. Derek was very aware of my interest in buses and suggested to my boss that it would be a good experience for me to be on the stand.

However, there was a small downside to this, as I was expected to make an extensive report about our competitor's products. This I collated every afternoon, as the crowds tailed off towards the evening. I wrote my report from my notes on my return to the office the week following the show.

I was up for the challenge doing stand duty but did not realize how tiring it can be on your feet all day, just talking to people.

In those days it was almost expected that alcoholic drinks of all types were available on the stand and as someone who has never felt the attraction of drink, I was not really competent in mixing the various drink requests that came from visitors.

One visitor, I particularly recall was a rather

the number of sales that would make it a true competitor of BLMC.

One amusing incident I recall was at one of the shows booked for the evening entertainment of customers, consisting of a large fish tank that naked girls jumped into from time to time and swam around. I believe it was called 'Pajama Tops'.

Norman Cooper, a short dapper man with a ruddy complexion, was MCW's works manager and was staying overnight. He was quite looking forward to attending this show with a number of customers and made sure he got a seat as near to the front as he could.

I saw him the next day and asked if he had enjoyed the entertainment, to which he replied, 'I got bloody soaked!'

The last Commercial Vehicle Show at Earls Court in 1976 did not seem as exciting as previous events, probably as everyone was aware that it was the last time we would be assembling in London. In that year, the exhibition hall looked particularly uncared-for. I had been to the brand new NEC, near to my home in Birmingham, which partly occupied the former MCW Elmdon Works.

I was not asked to do stand duty that year and I was glad, as I wanted to take my new girlfriend to London and show her the industry I worked in. The following year we married.

On the subject of models (attractive ladies), it is true that the Commercial Motor Show did not have the emphasis on them that the annual Motor Show did to support its displays. However, one incident I do recall at the 1968 event was coming across a crowd on the upper floor at Earls Court where the smaller suppliers had their displays. The gangway was completely blocked, so I pushed my way to the front to see what was going on.

Bostrom cab seating was displaying the latest suspension driver's seats in a novel way. The company had fitted a suspension seat and a non-suspended (fixed) type next to it. Both were anchored to a vibrating platform.

To test the effectiveness of the suspension seat, a young lady with a well proportioned figure, dressed in a very small bikini took turns on each seat. The non-suspension seat of course was the most popular to watch, hence the crowd that formed.

As the reader will see, these were quite different times to those we live in now. Political correctness was unheard of and women were no more than an attraction in a male dominated industry. Excessive drinking was accepted and all exhibitors seemed to have large quantities of alcohol available.

Certainly this culture would not be acceptable today, so the drink has mostly disappeared and women are colleagues and equals – certainly progress in my view.

I am hoping this year to become re-acquainted with the Walsall Daimler CRC6-36 that I described earlier at the 1968 Commercial Vehicle Show.

In later years I was to become a founder of the organization that is responsible for the operation and development of the Transport Museum, Wythall.

One of its Trustees, Dave Taylor, took on the massive job to restore the Walsall giant as near as possible to its original condition. He started this mammoth task in 1988.



The Bristol VRLL double-decker in Bristol livery, seen at the 1966 show. (CHC abm436)

The bus hopefully will be roadworthy this summer and I plan to ride on it at last, some 47 years after I first saw it. This will certainly stir memories of happy times and some of the personalities who are no longer with us that once congregated at Earls Court.

One criticism I must make of Malcolm Bates article is the disparaging remarks about the NEC and the West Midlands in particular, with his comment, 'Those in power in London over the years must have done something fundamentally wrong to make somewhere in the West Midlands seem like an attractive visitor destination for an exhibition!'

Perhaps when he was reading the Kelsey Media editorial manual and being so careful not to upset the female gender that this did not extend to the population of the West Midlands!

I hope he will grace us with an apology.

Many of us, who grew up and spent the formative years of our automotive careers in the West Midlands, always knew that this part of the UK was

the hub of the automotive industry and that it was only right that the exhibition of its products take place in the area that they were manufactured in.

This echoes of the silly misinformed comments that circulated forty years ago when the NEC was under construction from the 'London lobby' most of whom had never visited the West Midlands. It is sad that this comment has spoiled an interesting article.

As a regular reader now of Vintage Roadscene, I have also written elsewhere about Ansell's Brewery, featured in the December issue. As Senior Engineer - Sales, at Optare, An Ashok Leyland Company, you will see that I am still gainfully employed in the UK's bus manufacturing industry and in a few months will celebrate my 50th year in the industry.

As you will see I had first-hand experience as a visitor and as one of the sales staff who fielded enquiries from all comers in those now far off days. I have tried to inject some amusing episodes into my story as there is always a human element behind all of these occasions.

**Thank you for some very interesting and amusing tales. I am sorry you were not happy with Malcolm Bates's comments about the West Midlands. We quite understand your thoughts about the West Midlands, as the centre of a large part of in the motor industry for many years, much of which is now, sadly, a thing of the past.**

However, when it comes to the NEC, it is sited rather in the 'middle of nowhere', certainly as far as hotels and any entertainment outside the hours of the exhibition are concerned. I remember being involved, both as a press and as a PR man, when a company dinner to launch something would also involve a coach tour, to find a suitable venue some distance away. I've heard much the same said of the Excel site in Docklands. Your wonderful tales of the antics of your colleagues and others tend to sum up the attractions of a more central London venue for many industry people.

Unfortunately, the West Midlands along with the NEC, tends to get a 'bad press' because the attitude of lot of people to the venue is coloured by the first person they are likely to meet. I'm sure I speak for more people than I should, when I say that the overriding image is of a man in a shiny hat and, these days, a reflective jacket as well, saying: "You can't cum in ere, do this or that...", when all I want is to try and get on with my job. We all know security, traffic management and so on are important, but so is the attitude to those who are, after all, the customers.

## THAT BULL NOSE ATKINSON

I read with interest your article on pages 26 to 31 of February's edition of Vintage Roadscene, with regards to the Bull Nose Atkinson SBT 946XA, ALR 176B.

I acquired this vehicle in June 2000 and spent 10 years restoring the vehicle to its present condition. My interest in Atkinson vehicles dates back to 1965, when I became the first outside delivery contractor to work for the company. Although I did not deliver any of these SBT models, I was fortunately able to deliver a similar model to Sunters of Northallerton.

In your article, you requested any information with regard to the David

Brown 10 speed gearbox, which was only fitted to this one vehicle. Pickfords sold this lorry to Hendersons of Salford, which manufactured and fitted the lifting gear. This is operated by a Hydraulic pump, driven by a PTO on the nearside of the gearbox.

However, there is a winch situated directly behind the driver and crew seats. This is driven by a chain mechanism at the rear of the gearbox, operated by a lever situated on top of the box. The gear-change works the opposite way to a normal box. Although I can't be certain, I think Henderson's may have changed the gearbox to

accommodate the winch. I am seriously thinking of removing the winch which must weigh at least a ton and make more room for the crew who attend the shows with me.

Trusting the foregoing throws some more light on the situation.

**Keith Bradley, Formby, Merseyside**

*Thanks for this extra information on an interesting vehicle. Apologies for the delay using this letter and the first part of Mr Daulby's interesting follow-ups to some of our articles on the next page. I'm sure other readers are just as fascinated as I am, to read more about the subjects we cover.*



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## DAIRIES, PAPER VAN BODIES AND TIMPSONS COACHES

I enjoyed reading the Dairy Delights article in Issue 182 of Vintage Roadscene. It took me back to 1960, when I was a teenager, I used to help the milkman working for a local dairy, taking bottled milk to hospitals. The metal crates turned the skin on your fingers to leather. The dairy had four lorries with box van bodies, an Albion, a Thornycroft, and two Fords. All I got was half a crown a day, not much by today's standards, but I could go to the pictures and buy something to eat, and still have some money left over.

The milk was brought into the dairy from local farms in ten gallon churns, usually by haulage contractors. The churns were too heavy to lift when full of milk, they had to be tilted towards you and rolled off the lorry at an angle, using the lid on the churn like a steering wheel. The dairy was taken over by Express Dairies, and the bottling equipment was removed. Express used the dairy as a distribution depot.

I love all those Bedford 'O' Types and 'A' Types, I think they're great. I believe the Mier's Transport Guy Warrior in the article was fitted with a BMC diesel engine. You might think that was unusual, but the Dennis Condor, made around the same time, also used a BMC diesel engine.

Close to where I lived in the 1950s and '60s, there was a Co-op dairy bottling plant. The milk was taken to the distribution depots, using Atkinson artics with Scammell couplings – the only ones I have seen). The cabs were painted dark red, and they had dark red steering wheels to match. These Atkinsons were later replaced with Bedford TK artics, but the colour was changed to white.

With reference to 'Scenes Past' in Issue 183, the Austin FX3 newspaper van and the Bowaters AEC lorry in the photo on page 39 have something in common. The Austin FX3 was owned by The United Service Transport Company, which held contracts with the Evening Standard, the Daily Express, and the Sunday Express. The FX3 van bodies were made by Bayleys of Southwark.

The Bowaters AEC Mammoth Major Mk3 tin front had a cab made by Strachans of Acton, but the platform body would have been made by Bayleys. Both United and Bowaters were long time customers of Bayleys, established in the 1800s making horse-drawn wagons, and still going strong in the 1950s. The Bayleys factory was in Newington Causeway, just along the road from the Southwark Library, but the library



doesn't have any information about Bayleys. The company has disappeared without a trace.

Thank you for printing the Timpsons Coaches article in Issue 185, it was excellent. Alexander Timpson was a Plumstead coal merchant, and he bought a char-a-banc in 1912 for private hire work. In 1923 he bought some Straker Squire double-deckers, and ran a bus route from Plumstead to Bromley. By 1924, Timpsons had 18 buses in the fleet, and had extended the route to Farnborough.

The London General Omnibus Company bought the bus route and the 18 buses from Timpsons in 1926, and gave them to Thomas Tilling of Peckham to operate on behalf of the LGOC. Thomas Tilling replaced the Straker Squire chassis with Tilling-Stevens chassis, but continued to operate the route in Timpsons livery until 1928.

The sale of the buses and the bus route enabled Timpson to purchase the former LCC horse-drawn tram depot at Rushey Green, Catford which, in turn, allowed him to expand his coach business and become a major operator. As a 10 or 12 year old, I used to watch the Timpsons coaches running back to Catford

via Beckenham on summer nights. They started to come through Croydon around 6 pm and continued one after the other until well after 9 pm. Being far away from Crayford, I was unaware that Timpsons also supplied heating oil. It would have been a good source of winter income. Timpsons took over the Croydon coach operator Bourne and Balmer in 1953. It's an interesting story, but it would take more than a few lines to explain it properly (perhaps this is an opportunity for an article, please – Ed).

I like the big Luton vans, there were lots of them around in the 1960s, but not so many now. There was Wades Transport of Stamford Hill, Norwood Steel Equipment of Harlow, and Hush Puppies of Northampton or Leicester. NSE made office furniture.

The photo on page 21 of a yellow BMC, is an FGK 100 five tonner, fitted with a 5.1 litre six cylinder diesel. It has a 1964 number plate, whereas the BMC FM wasn't introduced until 1967. If you see them side by side, you will see the difference.

**H Daulby, Croydon**

## ANOTHER PAPER VAN

I read with interest your article on newspaper delivery vans. Please find attached a photo of my wife's late father driving his Evening Standard van along Brighton seafront which you may find of interest

**Steve Frampton, via e-mail**

*Thanks Steve, this is the just the type of van, based on the Austin FX3 taxi chassis referred to in H Daulby's letter and in our 'Scenes Past' picture. NLL 924 would have been registered in London around 1953, and working in Brighton a few years later. The 'United' badge can be seen on the radiator grille.*



## ANSELLS BREWERY

Belated thanks for the feature on Ansell's Brewery of Aston, Birmingham in December's issue of *Vintage Roadscene*.

This brought back happy memories of school holidays spent with my paternal grandmother, who lived within a quarter of a mile of the brewery. I later lived at her house for a short time with my parents, before we were re-housed to the outer suburbs.

A blind man would have known where he was with no difficulty, when visiting the area called Aston Cross, as not only was the brewery located there, but also the HP Sauce factory behind it. So there was the distinctive blend of brewing ale mixed with the aroma of HP brown sauce. Jumping off a corporation bus at Aston Cross, you were nearly bowled over by the smell. But to me in those days that was the smell of home and you got used to it.

In 1957, when the new frontage was unveiled on the brewery a full front page was filled with a picture of it in the Birmingham evening newspaper. I recall it looked very modern at the time. My aunt also worked there as a typist in this period.

The vehicle turnout always appeared immaculate and the dark green almost a khaki gloss finish was highly distinctive.

John Seale, Optare

## FLEET COLOURS

Sometimes events seem to conspire. Malcolm Bates' comments on the accuracy of models (not those on page 42!) in the March issue, the 70th anniversary of VE Day and recent articles on model lorries and the Tarslag women drivers in wartime and beyond, in the October issue, have finally prodded me into writing.

For years, I've been aiming to build a collection of model lorries reflecting, to a very small degree, the enormous efforts by civilian firms during World War II. Written accounts with photographs do appear, but the pictures are invariably black and white, giving little clue as to the livery colours. It seems only the US Army was provided with exotic colour film. Some liveries are well-known or can be guessed: Pickfords' blue and Tarslag yellow & black(?). But what about E W Rudd of Poplar, Pierson Haulage of Thornton Heath, or the splendidly-named road Engines & Kerr of Glasgow? Photographs only hint at some sort of dark colour with maybe another dark colour on the mudguards.

At a recent model show I asked one of the kit manufacturers where they find livery details. "He remembers them," was the reply, with a nod towards a gentleman of considerable years.

Does anybody else "remember them"? Wartime operations by the three firms I've mentioned are of particular interest. I'm not after British Standard colour chip references, but comments such as "red cab and blue body", or green with black mudguards" would be very useful.

I'd like to get these models right, as best I can, before memories fade away completely. Any guidance or colour pictures would be greatly appreciated.

Will Atkins, Shebdon, Staffordshire

## STILL WORKING

I found this ERF, J448 MAV, owned by County Waterwells Drilling Ltd, working on the Chatsworth Estate between Edensor and Beeley, on March 22nd 2015.

This vehicle was first registered on 12th August 1991 and is currently untaxed, according to the DVLA website. It shows the colour as yellow, traces of which can still be found under the present white paint.

Dan Sellers, Staveley, Derbyshire.



The cover of 'Did You Know? Croydon A Miscellany' magazine. The title is at the top in a large serif font. Below it are sections for 'FASCINATING FACTS', 'QUIZ', and 'HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS'. A historical photograph of a street scene in Croydon is shown, featuring a green van with 'RENT' written on it, people walking, and buildings in the background. The bottom of the cover includes links for 'GHOST STORIES', 'SPORT', 'RECIPES', and 'CROYDON AIRPORT'.

## A COINCIDENCE

As a keen reader of your magazine, I should like to tell you of a quite remarkable coincidence, which occurred two or three years ago.

When I was around eleven years of age (1959 to be precise), my brother, for a couple of years, drove a Bedford 30cwt van for a Penge-based pickles firm, Renown Products, delivering gherkins, vinegars and suchlike, mainly to fish and chip shops, all over London, of which I have fond memories.

We wind the clock on some fifty years, long after the van will have been scrapped, my brother moved on to better things and I have retired. I am in Croydon and espied in WH Smiths a small inexpensive book 'Did You Know? Croydon, A Miscellany', containing pictures of post-war Croydon, which I purchase. Some two weeks later, on closer inspection, what should I see on the cover and inside, but a rear view of the actual Bedford van he used to drive, LMU 50, delivering in Surrey Street market, which is a view still very recognisable today.

What is even more remarkable is that he tells me that this was not one of the regular deliveries

Colin Read, Croydon

## NOT WITH HCVS

I would like to bring to your attention, with reference to the article on page 65 of February issue 183, that Andy Rust and his vehicles, seen at the Donington Classic Commercial Show, are not part of the East Anglian division of the HCVS therefore the picture and statement does NOT represent our group as shown.

I would appreciate it if it could be published that this was an incorrect statement and that Andy Rust has no involvement with the East Anglian HCVS please.

Mr Stephen Golynia (Chairman)  
HCVS East Anglian Division

## LEYLAND BEAVER

With regard to the 'Aussie rally' in *Vintage Roadscene* issue 185 and the Leyland on page 63, this type of Leyland was in service with Siddle C Cook. I remember they were 'left-hookers' and day-cabs. I bet Elddis would have some photos of them. Hope this is a help. Good luck and keep up the good work.

Geoff Noble, via e-mail

## THE VAN THAT NEVER WAS?

Regarding the question in the April 2015 edition of *Vintage Roadscene* about the Bedford CA van in Post Office Telephone livery, I would suggest that Graham Dungworth makes contact with the Post Office Vehicle Club, POVehClub@aol.com

Graham's theory that the PO may have undertaken evaluation trials on the vehicle, could well be correct. The Morris J appeared to be favourite for many years with the PO both on the Mail and Telephones side of the fence at the time the Bedford CA would have been a competitor. Additionally when BMC decided to introduce the J2 model, the PO did not like what they saw (following evaluation) and so BMC extended the life of the J by introducing various updates including a more modern and powerful engine.

**David Marks, via e-mail**

**Chris Hogan, of the Post Office Vehicle Club, writes:**  
If Graham Dungworth looks back a few issues to VRS 175, June 2014, and our article on post-war medium mail vans, he will find an answer to his question. The GPO's Motor

Transport Branch did indeed run trials of vans of other than Morris manufacture in 1962-63, including the Bedford CA van. It obtained three trial CAs, two red mail vans and a green van with a roller shutter door on the nearside for use as a Telephone Utility.

The telephone van did not impress, but one of the other alternatives, the Commer PB 2500, went on to be bought in large numbers in 1966-67 and was later adopted by Post Office Telephones as its standard 15 cwt Utility from 1971 to 1981, latterly badged as the Dodge Spacevan. 250 Bedford CA mail vans were bought in 1964-1965 as a result of these trials as illustrated by ALB 506B on page 17 of VRS 175.

The second of the red trial vans, 932 FXY, was later repainted green and used as a runabout and this appears to be the basis for Oxford's model CA009. A photograph of it in its later livery, taken at the GPO's headquarters in St. Martin's-le-Grand in February 1967 is attached. 932 FXY was the CALVO model while the production mail vans were CASPOS.

The biggest problem with the Oxford model (and the company's other early GPO



models)

is that the colour is wrong. It should be Mid Bronze Green, not olive green. After this and a few other disasters from Oxford, I went down to Swansea and met 'Taff' and we have developed a good relationship with Oxford; its recent models are much better. Apparently they were using a consultancy to come up with liveries for their models, and they were frankly guessing what vehicles might have looked like!

I can add a little to the caption of CHC aao428 on page 32 of VRS 183. The GPO mail van in the background of the photograph of the Lancashire Evening Post vans, must have come from the 1944 batch of 100 Morris-Commercial CV11/30 (not LC3) chassis with

Harrington 340 cu feet mailvan bodywork, registered GXL 230-329.

Two of this batch, GXL 311/2 with GPO serials 23979/80 respectively were allocated to Head Postmaster Preston in 1945, and the photograph must be of one of this pair of mailvans.

Incidentally, in *Scrapyard Scene* this month, on page 21, ALB 306B is a GPO Morris FGK100 4 ton capacity Stores Truck with Rollalong Ltd. bodywork and Tico hoist and not a 550FM. The FM design wasn't introduced until 1967 and was, I believe, only produced as a 420FM model. ALB 306B had a six-cylinder engine, hence the 'snout'.

## SPECIAL BEER MAT

I can't wait to get to the Jacks Hill meeting, to see if Jim is wearing his baseball cap. What do you think of this model I have acquired of a Mcphee's Atkinson eight-wheeler? At my local, the Weavers Arms, I use my own beer mat – promoting Atkinson, as rare as rocking horse do-dah...

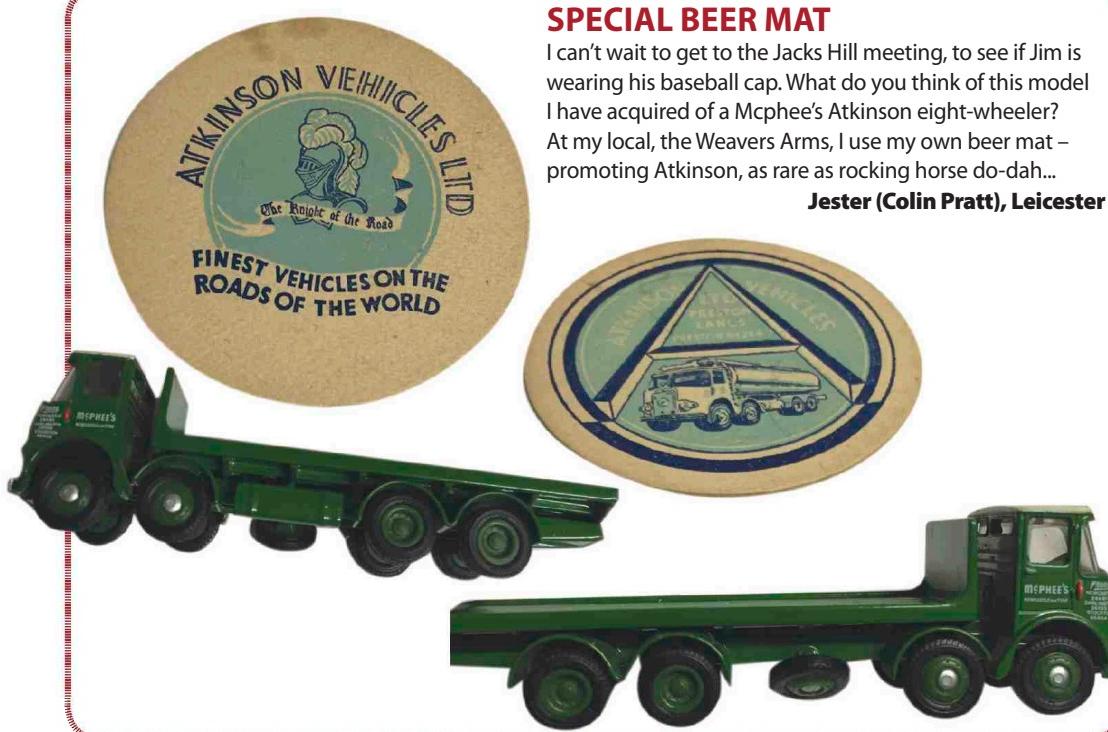
**Jester (Colin Pratt), Leicester**

## BRADFORD AEC REGENT

As a matter of interest, picture 7 in last month's article on a 'Fleamarket Find' of FKY 40 was taken in Thornbury Works yard. The tram tracks in the foreground are those that tram 104 ran up and down. The corrugated building behind is the 'tin shed', the original trolleybus depot, and used at the time for storing 'out of service' or 'scrap' trolleybuses, and seen parked in the yard in front of it. The brick walled area behind the front of the bus is the scrap compound, where all scrap metals and so on were kept under lock and key!

In PTE days the 'tin shed' was refurbished and converted into a workshop for the maintenance of the fleet of ancillary vehicles.

**Norman Hinchliffe, John Ayrey Die-Casts Ltd, Shipley**



## LEICESTERSHIRE MEMORIES

Just got issue 182, which I just had to buy, after seeing the Browns Blue story. I come from Ibstock and knew this company well. I am retired after five decades on the spanners. I would very much like to write to Mick Gamble as I reckon I will be able to give him a story or two about Browns Blue.

I found the story on the buses interesting too. As a young lad, we travelled every year during the 1950s and into the 1960s on Hall Bros coaches between Leicester and Chester-le-Street and, later, right into Sunderland. I have never seen anything written about this firm.

I served my time as a truck fitter with A Fletcher & Co, at Station Road Ibstock. I started in 1964, AF was big in coal haulage around the Midland pits and beyond, yet you never see anything written about this firm, let alone seeing any vehicles in preservation in their distinctive colours, nor the parent company R E Mason of Kilsby, Northants.

Another thought has crossed my mind, Fletchers garage on Station Road used to belong to Bircher Bros, which ran a fleet of Maudsleys and AECs. They were nationalised but sold up in the

early 1950s, Fletchers coming to town in 1954. I remember Mr Joe Bircher and Mrs Bircher from being a wee boy, later delivering their Leicester Mercury newspaper until about 1964. I remember – just – that they had a smashing fleet, yet again I have not seen any photos, except one which I photocopied from a book many years ago. It is pictured loading pipes at Ellistown Pipes. My Dad worked there after war service for 33 years, so you can understand my interest. I am trying, through my cousin, to contact Joe's sons to see if I can obtain further info, but it is proving a slow process.

I reckon Stuart Robinett's letter said it all. Have you ever heard of a firm called T&S Element of Brierley Hill? they did coal haulage from pits at Ellistown and also had a fleet of narrow boats. My old mate Fred Prosser drove for them after the war, until his retirement. He drove a Bedford S Type in 1954 then went onto Leylands, etc. T&S sold up quite a while ago now. I used to see so many different trucks come past my home in Heather in the early 1950s.

**Tony Lawrence, via e-mail**

*Has anybody any pictures of the vehicles which Tony mentions...*

## BRINGING THE 'ROADSCENE' BACK TO LIFE

Firstly, my dad was a trade plate driver for Spurlings of Hendon and he often told me about, and I saw first-hand, the awful conditions of the job in the 1950s. I think his trade plate was 462 MD, a 'General Plate', white figures on a red background (are they still so?). When he drover bare chassis back to Hendon from Luton, mainly Bedfords, they had no screens and he sat on a wooden crate-type structure with, on winter days, copious amounts of newspaper stuffed down an old army greatcoat. Many a time he went out about 7.30 am, drove all day, came home about 5.3 pm, had food and about two hours rest, then drove through the night, to Glasgow or somewhere else up north – 'elf n safety' would have kittens, I think!

The picture of the 'Van that never was' reminds me of a Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost of around 1925 vintage, which was around in the area where I lived as a child, London NW10, and I assure you it really existed as a breakdown truck, around the 1948-53 period. Painted a lovely golden brown, it

belonged to Brownlow Motors of Willesdon. It had horizontal slats on the radiator grille, which dates it to somewhere in the 1920s. I wish I had a photo to prove it, but I didn't have a camera in those days.

On to Rush Green Motors; I went there with a friend a few times in the 1962-64 period and mostly I recall an ex-Tilling ST Class double-decker, with chickens laying eggs in it, which looked as if it would collapse easily if you leaned on it.

Well, we know that escaped, as Prince Marshall, well-known at the time as the rescuer of several vehicles, mainly buses, had it running around as a special attraction in London on, I think, route 100. I think it was fleet no ST922.

While there, we saw a Leyland Titanic six-wheeler, which was all right at the front, but had collapsed at the back. I believe Birch Bros ran at least one of them. This fleet was very interesting, including a Leyland Comet, which went like the wind. I had many happy journeys on the company's vehicles.

Keep up the good work, I look eagerly every month for my copy in the post.

**Bob Henwood, Wimborne.**

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\* Circumstances might cause the planned contents to change

## LAUNDRY AND DRY-CLEANERS' VANS



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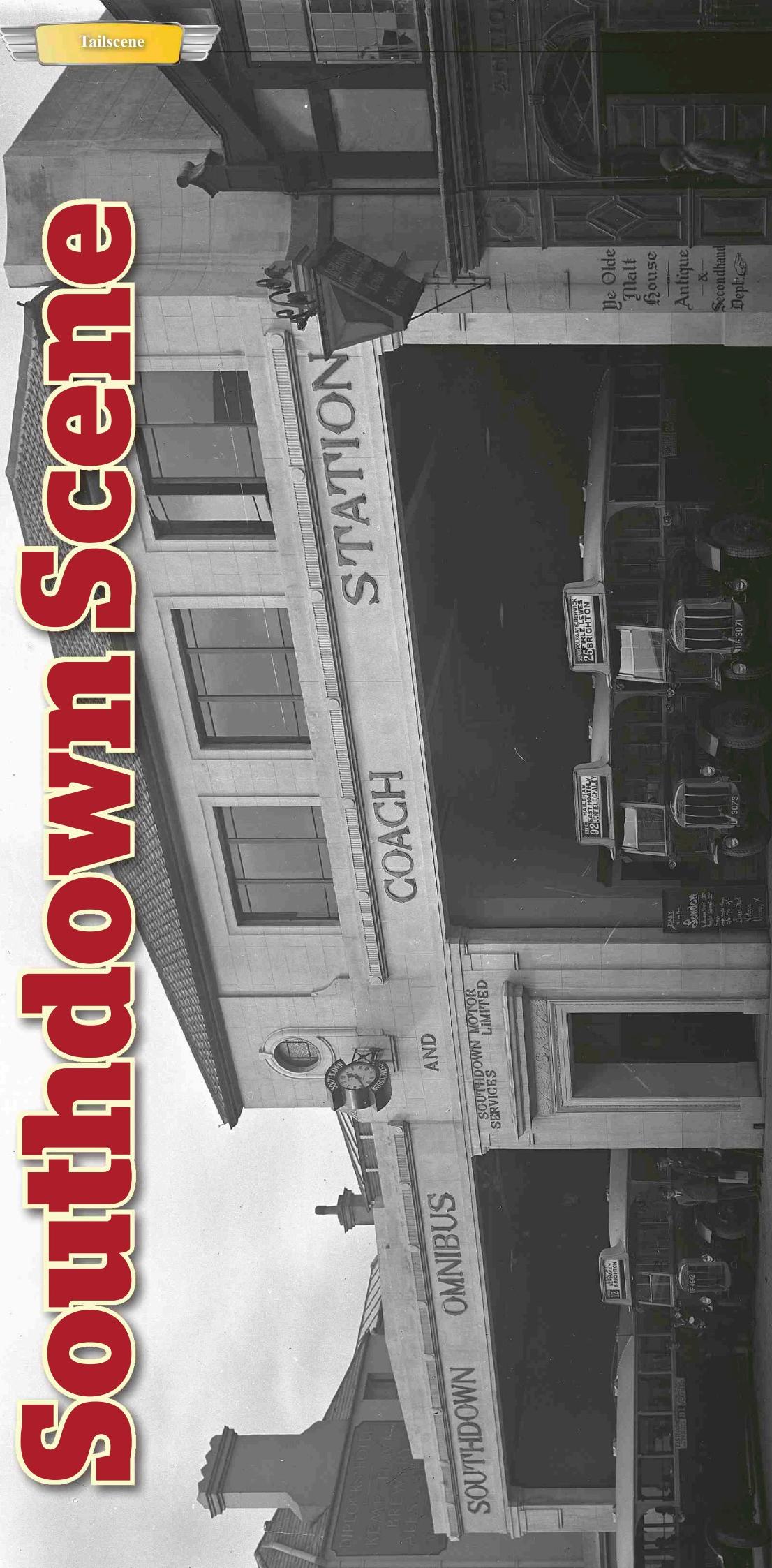
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# Southdown Scene



I'm using this picture as a contribution from Vintage Roadscene to marking Southdown's Centenary – and also as something of an apology. In my 'Vintage Bus & Coach Volume 2', Key Publishing's follow-up to last year's book associated with this magazine, using more pictures from the Chris Hodge Stilltime archive, I've made a massive 'faux-pas'. Why was it in my mind that the famous bus station in Brighton should be called 'Pool Meadow' – which is, of course, the bus station in Coventry – and not 'Pool Valley'? I am sorry for upsetting all concerned.

Anyway, here is Eastbourne Bus and Coach Station in the early 1930s. Having worked this out from the destination blinds on the buses, which were heading for Uckfield and Brighton, on separate routes through different towns and villages, the blackboard actually advertises coach services from Eastbourne to London – a day return for 6/6 looks like a bargain...

I would have been nice to have headed this 'Southdown – 100 not out', although that wouldn't have been strictly correct, but since Stagecoach now covers the sort of area in Sussex and along the South Coast which was once served by the Apple Green vehicles of so many peoples' favourite bus fleet, there seems to be more of an acknowledgement of history than there might have been with one or two of the other big modern combines.

Although there seems to be a lack of information to be found on these early Southdown buses, I think they are all Tilling-Stevens B10A2 chassis, with Short Bros bus bodywork. From the left, they are UF 3702, 4642, 3703 and 3701, dating from 1928-29, and very similar to the restored 1930 example to be seen at the Amberley Chalk Pits Museum. What a wonderful building and vehicles this picture shows – a real 'vintage roadscene'.. (CHC aa0912)

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2323 AEC RF Coach

Ex London Transport RF 573 is seen here in the livery of Valliant / Silverline Contract Division and was used for a variety of coaching duties. The blinds show it was entry number 78 at the 21st British Coach Rally in Brighton in 1975.

**APRIL RELEASE**



28011 Daimler DMS 1 Door

It is some time since we released a model from the West Midlands P.T.E. fleet, so this Daimler DMS will be welcomed. Registered MLH 350L, fleet number 5564 is working route 9 to Quinton.

**MARCH RELEASE**



29810 GM Standard Atlantean

LONDON COUNTRY NORTH WEST

Within London's AN class buses there were a few Northern Counties bodied GM Atlanteans as seen in fleet number AN 814. Registered LJA 605P our model is working the busy route 142 to Brent Cross.

**APRIL RELEASE**



28824 Leyland Titan 2 Door

LONDON TRANSPORT

London's Titans were a success and route 87 was serviced by them for over 20 years, quite an achievement. T119, registered CUL 119V is working route 87 to Barking and has adverts for Surf and Fare Deal.

**APRIL RELEASE**



36903 Park Royal Regent V

EAST KENT N.B.C.

After the rapid sell-out success of our previous Regent V we have had many requests for another East Kent version and this time in N.B.C. livery. Registered AFN 770B, fleet number 7770 operates route 501 to Arlington Town Centre.

**MARCH RELEASE**



26626 Plaxton Paramount 3500

FIRST SOUTHERN NATIONAL

Southern National has many collectors and this Paramount 3500 will expand the model fleet nicely. Registered UFX 330, fleet number 2229 is on service X96 to Bristol.

**APRIL RELEASE**



18014 Daimler MCW Fleetline

GREATER MANCHESTER

The changing colours of Manchester's buses as they went from City to P.T.E. and on to G.M.T. has created an interest with collectors. In the colours of Greater Manchester Transport, our Fleetline 4606, registered 4606 NE is working route 82 to Waterhead.

**MARCH RELEASE**



27318 Leyland TD1

WILTS & DORSET

With the anniversary of Wilts & Dorset approaching it is time for a little reminiscing and here our Leyland TD1 registered MW 7048, fleet number 87 is working on route to Wilton. The small quantity available means this will sell out fast.

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